

The Budget—Mr. I. Pelletier

Textile and Clothing Board, which was to impose a surcharge, was not deemed appropriate by the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce and, as a result, the situation kept getting worse.

Half measures or shy measures will never solve the problem. We must resort to extreme measures and protect the 90 per cent Canadian owned textile industry, to live decently and fully participate in the economic progress of the country. During the last two years, we know that imports, mostly from developing countries and some Asian countries such as Japan and South Korea, have caused considerable prejudice to our textile industry. Those massive imports have greatly damaged the textile industry in Canada. Everybody knows that GATT international agreements concerning textiles have been broken several times. Furthermore, we know that dumping was practiced at an alarming rate and that the Canadian textile industry felt its effects. We also know that the Canadian Textile and Clothing Board looked several times into the damages likely to be caused to the textile industry, and in most cases, it concluded affirmatively that there were indeed damages caused to the Canadian textile industry by massive imports.

How can the government redress the situation? In my humble opinion, there are several ways to do it. First, we should accept as such the recommendations the Canadian Textile and Clothing Board made when it was led to inquire into the textile field, where it is proven beyond any doubt that there was prejudice for the industry.

Like the government, the union members and the textile manufacturers themselves admit that the Canadian Textile and Clothing Board has done great things since its creation, that it has always presented complete studies of the situation and that its suggestions were always reasonable and fair.

Everyone admits the ability of its members and the value of its reports. The Canadian Textile and Clothing Board nearly always recommends a strict minimum of corrective action. Consequently, the government should at least accept these recommendations.

At the present time, and this is what is especially unfortunate, the Canadian Textile and Clothing Board must investigate because one of the two parties involved, either the workers or the employer, finds that there has been some injury to the Canadian textile industry. Consequently, the present role of the Canadian Textile and Clothing Board is simply that of a coroner. It steps in when the damage has already been done and, in my humble opinion, we must urgently review completely the role of the Canadian Textile and Clothing Board.

Why should the Board not become permanent and sit throughout the year? It could foresee the direction of the market, and could warn the government about action that should be taken before the damage is done. In this way, the Textile and Clothing Board would prevent in many cases considerable damages that it cannot prevent at the present time for the simple reason that it steps in much too late.

I strongly recommend, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Gillespie) consider

[Mr. Pelletier (Sherbrooke).]

this suggestion of making the Textile and Clothing Board permanent as soon as possible.

There is another way: In view of the great number of exporters who by-pass extremely easily the Canadian Anti-dumping Act, we should urgently reconsider the definition of dumping and establish that there is dumping when the sales price is lower than the cost price.

The great majority of textile producing countries greatly help their textile industry by granting all kinds of subsidies and stopping if required the import of foreign textiles which could compete disadvantageously with their own industry. One must not be fearful when it is a matter of protecting national interests in a sector like that one.

Third, Mr. Speaker, it is vital in my humble opinion that we decide once and for all what the share of the Canadian market and of Canadian producers will be, and that that share be determined according to their productive capacities. It is impossible in Canada to turn out products at the same price as in the developing countries. Shirts at \$1.99 are no longer available here.

The argument that we should have competition without considering the situation seems to me positively absurd. If we were to adopt those theories, many Canadian industries would be better off closing their doors as they certainly would not be able to compete with similar industries in countries which enjoy better marketing, economic and climatic conditions, and what have you.

In my view, Mr. Speaker, the best way to settle the problem of the textile and clothing industry is to consider Canadian productivity and Canadian textile potential to determine what part of the Canadian market domestic industries can supply, the balance will have, of course, to be imported by other countries.

If it can be proven that the home market can easily be supplied with domestic products, such should be the share of the Canadian market for Canadian manufacturers. This would result in textile workers, employers and investors regaining confidence, since everyone would know where he is going.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, if we are to implement the three suggestions I just mentioned, I consider it important that a tripartite conference—with the participation of the federal government, management and the unions—thoroughly review the situation of the textile and clothing workers in Canada so as to set up, after those discussions and within the shortest delay, a real national textile policy.

● (2010)

[English]

Mr. Donald W. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, my purpose in intervening in this debate at this time is not so much to comment directly on particular budgetary items such as increased taxes, the crushing burdens that are being loaded on to the Canadian people by this budget, or insufficient deductions before taxes, but rather to take advantage of one of the traditions of the budget debate, according to which one is enabled to float a few ideas relating to an important public matter. The one I have chosen is one to which the minister referred in his opening comments on Monday night.