

The Budget—Mr. Nesbitt

not once but many times, and in no case were they contradicted, or was any doubt cast upon their authenticity. There have been at least ten surveys of the Chignecto isthmus in the last century and a quarter. With only minor differences of opinion on technical aspects, all agreed that the canal was feasible. The following are some savings in miles that would be afforded by the Chignecto canal. The savings are of two kinds; that is to say, there is one route around Cape Breton island and one route through the strait of Canso. The difference between the maximum and minimum savings is 60 or 70 miles. I will give you the maximum savings that would be afforded by the construction of the Chignecto canal:

Montreal to Windsor, N.S., 561 miles; Montreal to Hantsport, N.S., 561 miles; Montreal to Parrsboro, N.S., 561 miles; Montreal to Joggins, N.S., 640 miles; Montreal to Digby, N.S., 452 miles; Montreal to Hillsborough, N.B., 645 miles; Summerside to Saint John, N.B., 662 miles; Summerside to Portland, Maine, 511 miles; Charlottetown to Boston, Mass., 422 miles; Saint John to Montreal, 481 miles; Saint John to Pictou, N.S., 553 miles; Saint John to Newcastle, N.B., 612 miles; Saint John to Charlottetown, 618 miles.

The Chignecto canal is a national need. In fairness to the Atlantic region, as well as in the interests of the whole country, Canada must keep her promise and build it now.

Mr. W. B. Nesbitt (Oxford): Mr. Speaker, there are two points with which I should like to deal during the present debate on the budget. Both of these matters relate directly to the budget itself. First of all is the matter of the textile industry and other similarly affected industries in the country such as the machine tool industry. I know that these matters have already been dealt with in this house at great length on many occasions besides this and that they will probably be dealt with again. But this problem with respect to the textile industry, the machine tool industry and others, of course arises owing to the matter of cheap labour and exchange advantages when trading with other countries which far overcome any tariff advantages there may be to the industries in this country.

I am particularly interested in this matter because in the city of Woodstock, which is the principal city in the riding I represent, there are 2,000 textile workers, many of whom are out of work and most of the remainder are on a short-hour week. In addition, the town of Ingersoll, which is a town of 7,000 persons also in my riding, is virtually dependent on the machine tool industry and lately that industry has been threatened for the same reasons, namely by the importation of machine tools from Holland, England

[Mr. Murphy (Westmorland).]

and, in some cases, the United States. For the sake of brevity I should like to deal chiefly with the matter of the textile industry. As I say, I do not intend to deal with it at any great length because it has been dealt with many times before.

As I think most hon. members of the house know, within the last few months a great many textile plants throughout the Dominion of Canada have been closing down, many of them apparently permanently. Since the textile industry is, I understand, the largest employer of persons in the Dominion of Canada,—a year ago almost 200,000 persons were employed in the industry—this situation is an extremely serious one. Recently the Minister of Finance (Mr. Abbott) made a speech after delivery of the budget at, I understand, a radio press conference. The implication of the minister's remarks has caused a great deal of concern in various parts of the country, particularly in my own constituency. I have not before me the exact words of the minister because they were made over the radio but the effect or the implication of his words was that if certain industries, particularly the textile industry, were not able to stand on their own feet, they would have to go by the board. I do not know whether the minister is returning to orthodox Liberal policy of 1911 when the matter seemed to boil down to the question of whether or not Canadians were to be hewers of wood and drawers of water but this impression, rightly or wrongly, has certainly been created by the minister's remarks on that occasion.

I think it is only fair to ask of the minister the following questions with regard to the textile industry, the machine tool industry and certain other industries. How far is the government going to go with regard to this matter of allowing Canadian industries to be put out of commission by competition from foreign countries? The second question is this. Are we going to have a textile industry or are we not? If so, to what extent? As I think every hon. member in this house well knows, there are many considerations other than the economic one which require that we have a textile industry in Canada. The country was glad enough to have one in 1939 when the war broke out; and this statement most certainly applies to the machine tool industry as well.

Mr. Speaker, my remarks will take about two minutes with respect to this matter, and I should like to finish them if I may do so. There is one further thing in this regard. The present policy of the administration has caused a great deal of dislocation in the textile industry in particular. Many plants