

*Textile and Clothing Board Act*

dealt with properly. When I questioned the minister and his officials before the committee, they stated that the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce does carry on studies regarding trends in the industry. These studies are available to the minister when passing judgment on any recommendations made to him by the textile and clothing board. This is a perfectly valid form of analysis. Such an examination needs to be carried out to determine the trends in the industry and the direction in which things are moving so far as they can be foreseen. However, I suggest that is not adequate.

As I pointed out during committee hearings, it is quite correct that an analysis of trends is one part of the process of developing a plan for industry. If you are going to leave it at that and then decide whether proposals and plans submitted fit within this trend, then certain assumptions are involved. Trends usually develop because they best serve the over-all public or national interest. A further assessment of the public interest is required before you can decide whether a proposal or plan fits in with the trends. When I speak of planning, I want to make it clear that I am not speaking of any sort of imposed plan, any sort of a monolithic, bureaucratic type of plan. The type of planning that would be required in this industry would involve a combined effort on the part of the government, industry, workers and other people associated with the industry.

I acknowledge that there have been consultations. The government has held many consultations with people concerned with this industry, both in the preparation of this bill and in dealing with the problems that the industry has faced for a number of years. I suggest there may be a further development of this process before the board and the government will be fully equipped to deal with the problem in the best possible way. In trying to understand the exact nature of the board proposed in this bill, I suggested to the minister during the Committee hearings:

Then, really what you are underlining, it would seem to me, Mr. Pepin, is that through this legislation you are establishing a framework for future policy development in that—

The minister then interrupted me by saying:

I have said that.

I find the minister's words are always much more complex than that when he speaks on these subjects. I continue to quote:

—this does not necessarily influence the policy that will be developed in future years. It simply establishes a structural framework within which policy is developed.

The minister indicated that was essentially the case. Later on, I said:

You are really going to leave it to the Board to make its own studies of the problems that exist, to assess the conflicting interests—and make their own assessment of the situation to develop their own criteria and to make their own judgments, which they then pass on to you—and upon which, then, you have to pass judgments.

• (3:30 p.m.)

“You” being the minister in this case. This deals with one aspect of the matter, but again it is clear that a

[Mr. Burton.]

complete framework for dealing with all these problems is lacking. The proposals contained in the bill before us amount to a step forward but they are still incomplete in this respect. I questioned the minister about this aspect on a number of other occasions during the committee hearings.

The issue of protectionism has been raised during the debate in this House as well as during the committee hearings. Is the board contemplated in the legislation to be simply a protectionist vehicle? The minister did deal with this matter at one point during the committee hearings. In answer to a question by myself, he said:

Will the Board be a protectionist one? Will it be the opposite of whatever a protectionist one would be? I really do not know. I suggest that we have appointed good members. We have given them the kind of task, the kind of definitions that are really motherhood before the Women's Liberation movement, and they have to bear in mind the interests of consumers, the interests of importers, the interests of exporters, the international situation, everything. That is what you wanted us to do is it not? Now they are going to come out with suggestions or recommendations to the government, and the government will have to make up its mind. Then, from that series of decisions, you will be in a position to judge whether the government is protectionist or not.

I thank the minister very much for setting out this situation so clearly in order that we might have a proper understanding of the functions of this board. Of course, we are very much concerned that there should be no greater degree of protectionism than may be necessary. I understood the minister to say, in answer to one of the questions I put to him, that it was quite possible some tariffs would be raised as a result of recommendations from this board and that other tariffs might be lowered. We want to see restrictions on trade removed as far as possible within the context of developing the Canadian economy on a rational basis. We should keep our relations with the developing countries constantly in mind, particularly since a good deal of the competition in this field is coming from those nations. The minister referred to this point, too, during the committee hearings.

It is necessary to take conflicting interests into account, to determine in which direction the industry is moving and the kind of industry we desire to see established in Canada. Here is an area in which more answers from the minister are needed. The hon. gentleman told us during the committee hearings that he really did not know. I cannot blame him for giving such an answer; some things cannot be forecast, though, as the result of events over the past two or three years in particular, the department has a good idea as to the likely trend of affairs. Above all, we must seek to reconcile the conflicting interests which arise when dealing with these questions. We must encourage and foster trade with all parts of the world. This is critical for us in Canada, and especially for some of us in western Canada.

On the other hand, when we are concerned with the affairs of an industry which employs some 200,000 people directly, as well as providing indirect employment for many more, this becomes a matter which cannot be treated lightly. It is for this reason that we are prepared to support the bill. We wish the government well. We shall watch its actions, we shall question its actions and