

Textile Industry

What do the words "as soon as possible" mean? The problem exists today and not two or three years from now. He is setting up a textile review board. Well, what do we need to review? He has been reviewing for the past seven years. What else is there to review? We know what the problem is. I had expected that today the minister would bring forward the legislation.

He cites the problem of international competition. I say to him that while we want to help and accommodate the low-cost countries, surely our prime interest must be in protecting the Canadian industry. Surely, therefore, we must achieve a balance. I do not think it would be wise to limit the Canadian market to Canadian producers but I would think we should have a more equitable balance than exists today. We are faced with a present problem, not one which should be left to another review board or to pending legislation which will not be implemented for a couple of years.

At least a statement has been made, but it contains a very impressive array of measures which really do not, as I have pointed out, seem to add up to very much when one examines their substance. The minister proposes to amend this and that bit of legislation. He talks about developing new inspection methods so that they can tell when people are violating our laws. He plans to ask foreign competitors to be nice to us. He plans to use the whole array of manpower retraining and relocation programs which have already proven to be so useless in doing anything for our unemployed. He does not seem to be prepared to do anything that would really help anybody. First, says this highly legalistic government, some laws have to be changed. Of course we on this side of the House will be blamed if we do not speed up the process of giving even more arbitrary powers to the cabinet to abuse or misuse.

The government really has plenty of legislative power. It has all the power in the world to detect dumped goods. All it has to do is open its eyes. Perhaps it should hire a few more eyes to place at our customs ports because a decent, properly trained, properly paid and properly treated staff of customs officers can do far more than a lot of legislative changes. Today's uproar at Windsor demonstrates the kind of fundamental problems that affect this government's administration. The Windsor problem typifies the situation. Yet all the government talk about doing to help the 200,000 people in the Canadian

textile industry is the passage of more laws and the setting up of boards like this textile review board which on first examination might appear to be useful. They also talk about spending more money on design, fashions and foreign exhibitions.

One might ask where the jobs are to come from under this program. I submit, Mr. Speaker, that after we have waited seven years for the government to announce its policy I should be permitted to spend a few more minutes on this subject. I predict there will not be any new jobs. I suggest there will not be one solitary new job for anyone. One might ask why I say this. I say it because the minister's own statement indicates that more unemployment is expected—not less but more unemployment. Somebody said that Liberal times are hard times. I might agree.

• (2:40 p.m.)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Comeau: Mind you, the minister is always fancy in his declarations. He has talked about "some dislocation because of the implementation of this policy." Mr. Speaker, more unemployment is what it really means. The government expects that its policies, which are supposed to help the people of the country, will result in fewer jobs for our people.

It might not be so bad if the increased unemployment were going to take place in areas where there are labour shortages. But just the reverse will happen. The increased unemployment will be borne by the province of Quebec, by the minister's own province, by the depressed areas of eastern Ontario, and even by my own little riding which has a textile mill in it.

Surely none of us would wish to disagree with measures that would help the Canadian textile industry to modernize its operations. We need far more automation of our plants and rationalization of the lines of production. Indeed, it has been said that if in 1967 we had made all of our own textile products and had not imported cheap shirts and materials from low-cost labour countries, we would have provided work for 20,000 more persons.

We must do everything to encourage the creation of new Canadian jobs. The government has all the rhetoric, all the powers and all the legislation needed. It has all the fancy packaging, all the trimmings, but these policies simply have not worked.