

*Canadian Economy*

Do we need someone from the EEC to tell us how to protect our imports? The Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce was delighted that a member of the EEC volunteered information on how to do it. Then he made two invidious comments which show how much he thinks of the manufacturing sector of this country. The article reports him as follows:

I think if Canadians could get over the market distribution systems, they would find themselves competitive and able to do business in this market.

That is a piece of wampum, Mr. Speaker; it means nothing. To say, "If Canadians could get over the market distribution system" is just as portentous as some of the statements made by the Secretary of State for External Affairs and has just as much meaning. Later in the article, he is quoted as saying:

The Canadian businessman perhaps isn't as aware of the changing world market patterns as, say, the Europeans.

He patronizes our industry. Even with the pitiful record of his ministry in regard to doing anything to develop the industrial sector or an industrial strategy for Canada, he patronizes our businessmen. The article goes on to say:

Nor is he much worried about dislocations in Canadian industry that might be caused by freer trade.

Hon. members opposite who were pounding the tables today had better keep their eyes on the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. He is not worried about dislocation in Canadian industry that "might be caused by freer trade." If the minister is not worried, a lot of people in Canada are. One of the people now getting worried is the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). He said in Charlottetown that he was going to call a federal-provincial conference on the economy. Well, he has to call something. He realizes that it is not just the national unity issue; the economic crisis is now the major issue. For the next couple of months we can all talk about the fact that there will be a conference on the economy. For the next couple of months after that we can talk about the fact that there was a conference. By that time he hopes we will have forgotten the problem and we will be in the middle of an election.

● (1632)

What is the conference going to discuss? The Prime Minister said:

—not one industrial strategy for all of Canada, but a series of strategies.

This government has laboured for ten years to come forward with an industrial strategy for Canada. It has not done so yet. Now the Prime Minister is going to pluck a series of strategies out of his head. How pitiful! Who is going to swallow that bunkum? I again quote:

He said structural changes in the economy will be needed because "there can be no immediate turnaround of our fortunes." . . . In the maritimes for example, fundamental changes are needed in fisheries administration.

He is an instant expert on that because of his infrequent visits to the maritimes.

Campbell said in an interview later that the top priority at the conference should be an attempt to get a consensus on whether Canada should be a free trader or a protectionist instead of having the current "hodgepodge."

If this conference is going to decide whether Canada should be free trade or protectionist, my God, it should have been

[Mr. Crosbie.]

held months ago. The negotiations are under way now at Geneva, and 1978 is the year of decision. The Prime Minister patted Premier Campbell on the back and said what a fine fellow he was and what fine suggestions he had made. Now Premier Campbell says that the conference is going to get a consensus. Are we free trade, or are we protectionist, rather than the current hodgepodge? That means this conference is going to be useless. If that is what it decides, it will be too late. Our free traders and our academics are going to be in Geneva and reporting back to this free trade of the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. They will be making decisions about which Canadian industry will not be advised. That is one of the main problems our industry is complaining about.

The Prime Minister is a year or two late with his conference. He is going to change the structure, now, of the Canadian economy. Why did he not do it when he had the wage and price controls? He did not do it during the last two years. However, with an election coming he wants us to believe he is going to cure it all and change the structural efficiencies he has done nothing to change over the last nine years. The Prime Minister made a statement over television at the beginning of 1976. He mused about whether Canada was going to have a state society and state socialism. He was critical of the business community. That fanciful musing of his cost Canada at least 1 per cent of our gross national product. By indicating what he believed, he scared off business investment in Canada. Economists estimate this cost a \$4 billion increase in the gross national product in Canada in that year alone.

This is the gentleman who is going to be so friendly and so nice to business in the next few months. He is going to put the bureaucrats down while he tries to lull them, getting ready for the next election. There is no industrial strategy, and none is being developed. There are no plans. There is no mechanism for consultation with industry while these negotiations go on in 1978. They have been given a chance to put in their brief to the Canadian Trade and Tariffs Committee. They have been patted on the head and told not to worry that they are too protectionist, that there has to be some rationalization and there has to be this and there has to be that. It means a loss of industry and a loss of jobs, but they are told not to worry. There is nothing set up now to keep them in tune as 1978 proceeds. No wonder they are worried!

The President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) is chairman of a cabinet committee to deal with these negotiations. Mr. Jake Warren reports to him. God help Canada if he does the kind of job on these trade negotiations that he did on the pipeline. He left Canada naked and defenceless in the pipeline negotiations. There is nothing in that agreement which states that Canadian materials and Canadian pipe are to have the advantage. There is nothing like that. In fact, the exact opposite is true. Therefore, the President of the Privy Council will have to pull up his socks and do a lot better job or we will be left naked in the GATT negotiations at Geneva. Today he did promise that he is going to arrange for some briefings for the opposition.