

*Interim Supply*

In the last few years, in particular, the textile industry, one of the oldest in the country and in the province of Quebec especially, has had to face the competition of developing countries which causes many problems for our Canadian workers and manufacturers.

When one reads in the paper, for instance, that an old Dominion Textile mill, the Merchants mill in Montreal, which employs 300 workers, will have to close down by next October, one realizes that the situation is really serious. On the other hand, the output of the Thor Mills of Granby has fallen off by 50 per cent and the situation is so serious that those textile workers have even decided to disregard the terms of their collective agreement in order to enter into a common agreement with their employer whereby they will go on short time so as to distribute among themselves the few dollars they can still earn through unfilled orders. Mr. Chairman, that situation is partially due to competition from developing countries that is not always quite fair. I have here a letter from a St. Hyacinthe textile manufacturer who complains that the labelling of products from an underdeveloped country is causing trouble for Canadian manufacturers. It seems that the buyer is being led to believe that the item is a Canadian product.

● (10:40 p.m.)

To clarify the thoughts of my correspondent, I shall quote part of this letter:

This sample as you can see is labelled (I will omit the name) and anyone who is not too familiar with purchases can easily be misled, thinking he is buying Canadian goods, for the label is quite conspicuous, large and marked Montreal. However, if you unfold the pants you see on the inside a small label saying "Made in Japan".

Surely this shipper is using a method which is dishonest and detrimental to our Canadian manufacturers and workers.

I have contacted the hon. minister concerned and drawn this anomaly to his attention, so that it may be corrected.

There is also another field with which I should like to deal for a few minutes only, namely the shoe industry.

Yesterday we had a meeting with the manufacturers and the workers' representatives in this industry, which, due to foreign competition, is in the process of disappearing. I cannot help but blame the government for this decrease in the number of Canadian shoe manufacturers.

We know, for instance, that the Canadian footwear can be favourably compared with

the footwear of any other country. But there are so many goods imported from emerging countries that since 1963, 29 Canadian manufactures were compelled to close. Of that number, 13 were located in the province of Quebec.

Mr. Chairman, when we think, for instance, that a manufacture such as Ludger Duchêne Incorporé, which had been founded in 1907, was compelled to close its doors. Those who are interested in the welfare of Canadian workers have every reason to be concerned. We have lost 13 such factories since 1963, when the present government came to office.

But there is more, Mr. Chairman.

Imports increased by 8,565,730 pair of shoes from 1963 to 1966, with Canada's production over the same period decreasing by 1,102,857 pair.

While shoe imports represented only 5 per cent of Canadian production in 1951, in 1966 they amounted to 49 per cent of our production.

Mr. Chairman, there is cause for concern, and representatives of both the shoe manufacturers and the workers in the shoe industry, were right in warning us that they could not wait any longer. It is absolutely essential that the government do something, otherwise, this home industry which is in the process of disappearing, will surely and quite rapidly disappear.

If I took a few minutes to bring this question to the attention of the cabinet, it is because I have in my constituency, a half dozen shoe manufactures employing at least several hundred workers.

The consequences from a municipal point of view can be imagined if the employees were thrown into the street overnight and forced to find work elsewhere.

The shoe industry employs some 24,000 workers in 220 shoe manufacturing plants spread all over Canada. To this should be added nearly 15,000 other workers employed in other plants supplying the shoe manufacturing plants.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I should like the relevant authorities to take due notice of this warning that was sounded by the shoe workers and manufacturers. I should also like to ask the Minister of Industry and Defence Production (Mr. Drury) to bring all the influence he can bring to bear to convince his colleague, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp) to abolish this 12 per cent tax which hinders Canadian manufacturers in their efforts to compete with foreign products.