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2-1 majority in House to limit textiles

Washington (Sept 17) — Representative Mr James Broyhill, R-North Carolina, said on Monday that a bill to limit textile and apparel imports will pass the House of Representatives by more than a 2-to-1 margin and that there are enough votes to override a presidential veto of the measure.

Mr Broyhill said he expects the bill to get to the House floor in late September or early October. It will be debated in the Ways and Means Committee next week.

More than 290 House members have co-sponsored the legislation, strongly opposed by the White House, and Mr Broyhill told reporters that other members have promised to support it on the floor.

The bill, which imposes quotas, is aimed at major exporters of textiles and apparel — namely Hongkong, Taiwan, Korea and China — and supporters say the measure will only allow the domestic industry to compete fairly by putting some teeth in the MFA.

Mr Broyhill said he could not speak for the Senate, where 54 senators have co-sponsored the bill and the Senate Finance Committee is studying it.

"The vote in the House of Representatives will be over 2-to-1 for the bill," said Mr Broyhill, who has been in Congress since 1962. "I think there are sufficient votes in the House to override a veto."

During a question-and-answer session with visiting reporters, President Reagan declined to say whether he would veto the bill, even though American Trade Representative, Mr Clayton Yeutter, indicated last week that he would.

Mr Reagan said advocates of protectionism, in seeking to preserve jobs in one industry, fail to recognise "the retaliation that then throws people out of work in other jobs."

He pledged vigorous efforts to open foreign markets to American goods and to fight unfair trade practices where warranted.

Imports of textiles and apparel are supposed to be managed by a series of bilateral agreements and treaties negotiated under the Multi-Fiber Arrangement which expires next year.

Supporters claim imports of textiles and apparel since 1980 have grown at a rate well above the 6% envisaged by the MFA. That surge, they say, has led to a decreased domestic share of the textile and apparel market and a loss of jobs.

The administration says it has acted under the MFA to limit imports, that the textile and apparel import problem is the result of macro-economic factors — like the strong dollar — and that the bill would invite retaliation.

Earlier this summer Commerce Secretary, Mr Malcolm Baldrige, called the bill "bad trade policy and worse economics." — UPI