

Canada—U.S. Automotive Agreement

asked regarding whether the results are good or bad. But surely we are in a much better position to judge the results when we have partial results than if nothing had been done at all.

Mr. Churchill: Could I ask the minister a question?

Mr. Drury: Yes.

Mr. Churchill: If the agreement was turned down by parliament, would the cabinet simply ignore parliament's opinion?

Mr. Drury: If parliament failed to approve this agreement, obviously we would have exactly the same situation as when the House of Commons declines to approve an act of policy of the government which it is within the administrative abilities or functions of the government to carry out without parliamentary approval. This normally, of course, takes the form of a confidence motion. The result of failure to approve the agreement in this case would be exactly the same as failure of the government to secure the support of the house on a motion of confidence. I do not think I need tell the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre that.

If I may continue from the point at which I was interrupted, Mr. Speaker, a consequence of deferring discussion on this agreement until such time as it had been in partial operation for a while makes such discussion more intelligible and consequently, I think, more constructive. I would hope that members of the house would welcome this delay rather than deplore it for purely technical, procedural or hypothetical reasons.

Mr. Lambert: Would the minister accept that principle in regard to other legislation or does it apply only in this case?

● (2:10 p.m.)

Mr. Drury: No, Mr. Speaker, this is not legislation. We are not dealing with legislation.

Mr. Lambert: Oh.

Mr. Drury: I would stop the hon. gentleman there. The suggestion has been made that this agreement might be referred to a committee for examination. The reason advanced is that there is great interest in the agreement and it will enable the house to be better informed as a consequence of examining both members of the administration and outside witnesses. As evidence of this interest, the hon. member referred to the large

[Mr. Drury.]

number of references in *Hansard* in the course of the past year to the automobile agreement. I note in passing that there is a page and a half in the *Hansard* index—not *Hansard* text—showing where information is to be obtained and was given and coupled with the debate we have already had on a supply motion this does seem to me to provide a fair and adequate answer to the charge or suggestion that the government has not been providing any information on this subject and has been withdrawn and secretive.

In so far as reference to a committee is concerned, I believe the house will recall the discussion we had a few days ago on the problem of securing quorums for parliamentary committees and the desirability of reducing them. The argument was made that this was necessary because there were so many committees meeting simultaneously and they had so much work to do that it was impossible to secure a very large attendance. To refer this to a committee would indicate a lightheartedness and disregard really for what are urgent questions for discussion by committees. To refer this matter to a committee on the grounds that somebody might be interested does not seem to me to be a very practical or businesslike way of conducting the business of parliament.

Mr. Winkler: Will the minister permit a question? Does he not think that at this stage, after the agreement has been in effect for so many months, the benefit of advice from manufacturers themselves would be essential to parliament to determine whether the government had indeed done something valuable or otherwise? This is all we are asking; this is all we have asked during the entire debate.

Mr. Drury: Mr. Speaker, if a parliamentary committee is going to endeavour to ascertain from the manufacturers whether they endorse this agreement, which they have already done in the form of letters tabled in the house, I do not believe that anything will be gained, to be quite frank. In my view it would be a misuse of parliamentary time to thrust this additional chore onto already overloaded parliamentary committees.

Mr. Winkler: It would at least be a democratic exercise.

Mr. Drury: Perhaps I should not comment on that. If the hon. gentleman equates democracy and inefficiency, perhaps there is some substance in what he says. I have the view,