

Canada-U.S. Automotive Agreement

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rinfret): The hon. member for Waterloo South.

Mr. Max Saltsman (Waterloo South): Mr. Speaker, I intend to speak but briefly. I intend to speak on behalf of a riding that is highly industrialized, the riding of Waterloo South, which I have the honour to represent, a riding that to a considerable extent has benefited from the auto agreement. However, despite the fact that this benefit has taken place and that increased job opportunities have occurred in the riding, considerable concern is felt by everyone that we may have taken a step which, in the long run, may work to our disadvantage. Perhaps we have sold out for a mess of pottage. The step the government has taken may be of an irreparable nature.

What creates the greatest concern is the apparent conclusion the government has arrived at, the conclusion that continentalism is inevitable and, because it is inevitable, we should work out an arrangement that will make it even more inevitable.

The method the government chose to bring this measure into effect is also cause for concern, in the sense that it did not permit a debate in advance of the decision it made—a debate in the House of Commons among the elected representatives of the people. Such a debate would have provided an opportunity for a national dialogue on this whole problem: In other words, do we want continentalism or are there some other choices open to us? The government does not appear to have considered the other choices that might have been available in this particular matter.

Admittedly the automobile industry was badly in need of rationalization and, as my colleague from Danforth (Mr. Scott) pointed out, the multiplicity of models being manufactured in Canada really made a mockery of any attempt to get an efficient industry operating in this country. Perhaps Canadians did not need all those models of automobiles. Perhaps we could have taken the step that has been taken by countries like Sweden, Germany, France and England, and developed a national automobile of our own. We could have achieved rationalization in that manner. We could have eliminated some of the worst features of splintering that exists in the industry, and could have been very efficient in the production of a national automobile.

With such a national automobile we could have embarked on world trade, as did the

nations I have mentioned. They did not discover it necessary to go into continentalism and integrate their industry with the industry of another nation in order to survive. I do not know what the answer might have been, but at least the representatives of the Canadian people in this parliament would have had an opportunity for that kind of debate and for the exploration of these ideas.

As we look at the effects of the agreement now, I think we can say that it has provided employment opportunities. I do not think we can say it has done very much for the Canadian consumer, although there is a possibility that even that may happen in the future. But if we look at what it has done to the quality and the nature of our industry, I think we have to be extremely concerned.

Speaking on the adjournment debate one night I indicated that we in Canada were possibly going to be the new hewers of wood and drawers of water in a technological age, that the skilled work, the scientific work that is involved in the automobile industry would no longer take place in Canada, that opportunities for work of that quality would no longer be available to Canadians, that the nature of this agreement permitted the automobile companies to do tool and die work in the United States, to do their research in the United States, and then to send their products here for us to run assembly plants.

I know there is some benefit we receive from this sort of thing, but in the long run it may not be a benefit; it may be to our great disadvantage and we may find ourselves inexorably bound to continentalism and to a position from which we cannot retreat.

● (9:20 p.m.)

Even if some time in the future we consider it in the national interest to have something indigenous to our country, that also may have been lost. The people we may require, the skills that will be needed, and the techniques that are important at the top will not be available to us. We all are fearful that some of the statements, which are made in the United States by people who perhaps do not understand how deep is the feeling among Canadians—if I may use the expression—to be masters of our own house, may become a reality. I should like to quote from some of those statements which appeared in the *Financial Post*. It is reported that one manufacturer said:

To give up a big part of the profits from a Canadian operation to Canadians—who gain through