

Inquiries of the Ministry

and Commerce. It has to do with the request of my colleague from Peace River that the minister consider making a statement next week. In the interval I wonder whether he could direct the not inconsiderable energies of his department to ascertaining from Canadian industry, which may have a fair intelligence net, what industries will be particularly affected? I have in mind the Canadian petrochemical industry, fine papers and many others. Would he do this so that he could amplify his statement and we could look at the whole question with much more information at the time of the budget debate?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, this is being done by a group studying the effects of DISC in Canada. As every hon. member knows, there are a number of things Canada could do to react to the DISC effects, but it is too early for me to indicate which route the government will take.

SUGGESTED REASSESSMENT BY CANADIAN AUTO
MANUFACTURERS OF POSITION IN LIGHT OF CAR
PRICES AND PARTS IMPORTS

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): In light of the information that has been given to the minister to date with regard to two major automobile manufacturers and in light of the now public exposure of the differences in prices of automobiles manufactured and sold in Canada and the United States and the flood of automotive parts coming into Canada from the United States under the encouragement of DISC, is the government now considering calling upon the auto manufacturers to make a complete reassessment of their position in Canada, particularly as it affects the Canadian consumer?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Every word should be qualified. When the hon. member talks about a "flood of parts" imported into Canada, he should look at the answer I gave yesterday or the day before on that subject. Our exports to the United States at the moment are as good as they were at this time last year, at which time they were excellent, and they are not as good as they will be if automobile sales trends continue. There is nothing wrong with the present situation with respect to trade in auto parts.

• (1120)

With respect to prices, the other aspect of the question raised by the hon. member, I have already indicated to the House that a very thorough analysis is now being made. I personally believe that the gap in prices between the cost of production of automobiles in Canada and in the United States will always exist. The question is how wide a gap is tolerable, and I hope to give answers to that in the very near future.

UNITED STATES DISC PROGRAM—INFORMATION
SUPPLIED TO MINISTER BY AUTOMOBILE
MANUFACTURERS

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that in reply to questions by myself in the past month in the House the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce assured us that on the basis of his

information automotive manufacturers had not applied for DISC, and in view of the fact it has now been revealed that as long ago as last fall the Ford Motor Company and General Motors Corporation applied for DISC, could the minister inform the House whether or not he was misinformed by the companies in the past about their intentions with regard to DISC or was he relying on some other source of information which perhaps was not reliable?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): As I said this morning in answer to the first question, I formed my own impressions. Whether they were right or wrong, whether it was my fault or the fault of the people who gave me the information, I will let hon. members judge.

Mr. Broadbent: Notwithstanding the minister's assurances that he will do something in the future to somehow improve the situation, would he be a little more specific in the following way: would he assure the House that within the next week or ten days he will request the heads of the automotive companies in Canada to come to Ottawa for a meeting with him to explain their intentions concerning the DISC legislation? Will he point out to them that their profits are running in excess of \$150 million a year over and above what they get for similar automobiles in the United States, and would he also point out that they have had very substantial benefits and that they owe Canadian workers and consumers—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. That is not a question. The hon. member is now making a speech.

UNITED STATES DISC PROGRAM—LAST
COMMUNICATION BY MINISTER WITH FORD OFFICIALS

Mr. A. D. Hales (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question follows the one just asked. Have the minister or his officials contacted the Ford officials since the information was released that they have been using the DISC program as far back as December, and when did he last speak with the Ford officials?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): I spoke to Ford officials at 9.10 this morning, or about that time.

[Later:]

Mr. Hales: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question follows the minister's statement that he spoke to Ford officials this morning. Did they confirm that they have been using the DISC program since last December?

Mr. Pepin: Yes, Mr. Speaker, that was confirmed.

Mr. Fairweather: What a fantastic breakthrough.

Mr. Hales: Is the minister in a position to say that he misinformed the House or was given the wrong information?

Mr. Pepin: I think I have already answered that question.