

Canada-U.S. Automobile Agreement

calculate. All he needs to do is dissolve the House, and he can do this any time he likes. It is his right to call an election. What I suspect is that he wants to have an election in which he can blame the Opposition for having defeated him.

An hon. Member: How right you are.

Mr. Douglas: I think the Prime Minister had better make up his mind. If he wants to get on with the business of the country, he will certainly get the support of this party in so far as proceeding with good legislation is concerned, but if the Prime Minister wants to interpret our co-operation as being a sign of either timidity or cowardice he is making a mistake because where we feel we must criticize and where we feel we must oppose we will do so irrespective of whether or not this involves an election.

The second reason for our projecting a debate on this motion to go into Committee of Supply is that we feel there is a matter, the discussion of which is long overdue. I am referring now to the Canada-United States automotive agreement. This agreement has been in effect since the 1st of January in so far as Canada is concerned. The United States Congress has not yet ratified it but it has been in effect for over four months in so far as Canada is concerned. Members of this House have had no opportunity to debate it. No Minister of the Crown has given to the House or to the country a full and definitive explanation of the policy emanating from the Canada-United States automotive agreement.

I think it is lamentable that an agreement of this importance, which in the United States has been submitted to Congress and is now before a Congressional Committee where it is being debated in detail, should have been passed in Canada by Order in Council and put into effect under the powers given to the Governor General in Council under customs and tariff legislation. Here is a matter of profound importance to the people of Canada. Here is something that will affect the Canadian treasury and will affect Canadian consumers, Canadian manufacturers and Canadian workers. Four months after it came into effect Parliament has not even had an opportunity to examine it, to question the Minister on it or to hear the Government's views or opinions. No, all this was done by Order in Council.

It is significant that in the United States their government signed the agreement but

they did not assume the dictatorial attitude of putting the agreement into effect by government order. Instead they drafted the Automotive Products Trade Act which not only incorporates the agreement but sets out specifically the protection which the American government is going to guarantee to its workers and industries affected by the agreement. We have made no such provision. Our Government, simply by Order in Council, put this far reaching agreement into effect and has left Parliament dangling for four months with no power to do other than ask the occasional question on the Orders of the Day. Therefore we concluded that on the first supply motion which gave us the opportunity to do so we should ask the Government to give the House and the country a full explanation and we should also avail ourselves of this opportunity of expressing our views regarding this agreement.

I want to make it clear, Mr. Speaker, that we are not against the rationalization of the automobile industry or, indeed, the rationalization of any industry if it can be shown that it is in the best interests of the Canadian people, the consumers, workers and industrialists involved. Certainly the whole trend in the world today is toward a greater rationalization of industry, and much of the progress which has been made in the European Common Market has been due to the rationalization that has taken place, particularly in uranium, in the steel industry and in a number of ancillary industries. I have no doubt that as the years go by there will be advantages in a greater measure of rationalization of industry between Canada and the United States. But, Mr. Speaker, in this process of rationalization the Government has a responsibility to protect the interests of those who may be adversely affected. It also has the responsibility of protecting the interests of Canadian consumers.

What does this automotive agreement do? It relieves the three large car manufacturing companies, Ford, General Motors and Chrysler, from paying the usual duties on cars and automotive parts which they bring into this country. This will save these three companies something in the neighbourhood of \$50 million a year. This is \$50 million which the Canadian treasury will not receive. This is a gift which the people of Canada are making to the Big Three automobile companies.

I was interested in picking up one of the Toronto papers to see a speech which had been made by the Minister of Transport (Mr.