

Inquiries of the Ministry

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): The document that I tabled this morning announces an extension of the regulations under the automobile adjustment assistance program, and this will be, I think, of great assistance to the auto parts makers. They will be pleased to hear that. The extension is for two years. It is well known that the United States government has made requests to Canada for the elimination of two so-called safeguards. This discussion is still continuing. I have not heard from anyone in the United States suggesting a denunciation of the agreement, which would be the way to put an end to it. I have not heard that expressed by anyone in the U.S. government.

Mr. Saltsman: In order to clarify what the minister has said, while he has heard no denunciation, can the minister indicate whether he has received assurances that the auto pact will be continued in its present form with the Canadian safeguards in it?

Mr. Pepin: I do not know how to answer this question. The fact that they have not talked about putting an end to the pact is considered by me as an indication that they intend to continue with it. But I said on a number of occasions that it is official U.S. government policy to request elimination of the two safeguards, that is, the ratio and the Canadian value-added safeguards.

AUTOMOBILES—ALLEGED COMPANY POLICY TO TRANSFER JOBS TO UNITED STATES

Mr. H. W. Danforth (Kent-Essex): I have a supplementary question for the minister. In view of the growing concern that the events in Windsor and the indication of a further 2,000 lay-offs in other cities in Ontario may be the result of a direct program of job export to the United States to compensate for the import of foreign cars, can the minister say whether he has investigated this policy and can he indicate whether definite action is planned to counteract such a serious possibility?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Two cases were brought recently to my attention, one of them by the hon. member for Kent-Essex. I had them checked and I was assured by Ford that they had no plans to utilize facilities in the United States, such as the Flat Rock, Michigan, foundry, to replace existing production in Windsor. I had checked previously regarding the engine plant. This is the firm statement made by the Ford company with respect to the two cases that were brought to my attention.

AUTOMOBILES—SUGGESTED DUTY-FREE IMPORTATION FROM UNITED STATES

Mr. A. D. Hales (Wellington): I would like to address a supplementary question to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce dealing with the pricing of cars. In view of the fact that United States citizens are allowed to import cars from Canada duty free, will the minister make it possible for the same privilege to be given to Canadian citizens so they can import cars from the United States into Canada duty free?

[Mr. Saltsman.]

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): This would not be considered to be in the Canadian interest, Mr. Speaker.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Hees: That is a typical answer. He does not know.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Chair will recognize the hon. member for Waterloo, who introduced this subject, for a last supplementary and then go to the hon. member for Bellechasse.

AUTOMOBILES—ALLEGED COMPANY POLICY TO TRANSFER JOBS TO UNITED STATES—UNION REPRESENTATIONS

Mr. Max Saltsman (Waterloo): Mr. Speaker, officials of Windsor Local 220 came to see the minister. They spoke to him and expressed their concern that the rationalization of Canada-United States auto production is being used as a guise for the transfer of Canadian jobs to the United States. May I ask the minister whether his department has set up machinery for surveying the conduct of the auto industry under the Canada-U.S. auto agreement and whether he is in a position to assure the House that the charges made by this union local are being examined?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): I was somewhat distracted at the beginning of my hon. friend's question because I was not the minister whom these gentlemen saw. They saw the Minister of National Revenue. May I say in answer to the substance of the question that we have a system. We check and analyse every bit of news that is brought to our attention, as we have done in the case I have just mentioned, and we keep a very interested and open eye on developments in this industry.

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[Translation]

INDUSTRY

CHEMCELL LIMITED, MONTMAGNY—ALLOCATION OF PRE-RETIREMENT PENSION TO LAID-OFF EMPLOYEES

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): I wish to direct my question to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce.

Is the minister in a position to tell this House whether according to the legislation setting up the Textile and Clothing Board and under the attendant regulations, those workers aged 54 or over who have been employed for some years with the Chemcell factory in Montmagny and who are threatened with dismissal, might possibly enjoy a pre-retirement pension up until they are 65 years old?

Mr. Speaker: I think this question could easily be put on the order paper or debated on adjournment. On the other hand, I agree this is an important issue and the minister might answer briefly.

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, I answered this question a few days ago at the request of the hon. member's party,