

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, April 23, 1970

The House met at 2 p.m.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

CONSUMER AFFAIRS

REPORTED REDUCTION OF AUTOMOBILE SAFETY FEATURES BY MANUFACTURER

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs who is, of course, the watchdog for the protection of the consumers of the country. Is he able to assure the House that the reported reduction by an automobile company in certain safety features does not constitute a hazard to the Canadian consumer in his capacity as a user of automobiles?

Hon. Ron Basford (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I think the question should properly be directed to the Minister of Transport who is the minister responsible for the legislation on car safety to which the House gave approval only a few weeks ago.

Mr. Stanfield: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. May I explain to the minister that I put the question to him because I do not believe that the Minister of Transport has any regulations in effect yet under that act, and I was wondering whether the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, as protector of the consumer, had ordered any investigation into this reported reduction in safety features on automobiles. Has the minister ordered any such investigation, is he prepared to order such an investigation, or is he just going to sit back and say that it is somebody else's job?

Mr. Hees: As usual.

Mr. Basford: Mr. Speaker, I will consult with my colleague the Minister of Transport, who is responsible for the administration of the automobile safety program in Canada, so as to assure that there is no weakening of consumer protection.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I have a further supplementary question. Would the minister

himself also make an inquiry or have somebody else make an inquiry into the report that this cutback in safety features was ordered by the United States head office of the company in question?

Mr. Basford: Mr. Speaker, I will be happy to check that out.

PRICES AND INCOMES COMMISSION

GOVERNMENT POSITION ON STATEMENTS IN BROCHURE, "FIGHT INFLATION"

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, I also have a question for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. Has the minister seen the brochure entitled "Fight Inflation" issued by the Prices and Incomes Commission, and has the commission consulted him, or to his knowledge any other department, as to the contents of the propaganda in the brochure?

Hon. Ron Basford (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): No, Mr. Speaker. The brochure was prepared by the commission and issued by it.

Mr. Lewis: Then in that case, Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that there are contained in this brochure statements of policy about what should happen in the country, for example, that "pensions, wages and other money payments should not rise automatically in step with the cost of living because this would make inflation much more explosive"—I notice that the minister has a copy of the brochure in his hand—may I ask whether he and the government support this statement of policy by the commission?

Mr. Basford: Mr. Speaker, these are observations that are made by the commission. The commission is authorized to make such observations under its terms of reference. The particular observation to which the hon. member has referred should, I think, more properly be dealt with by the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Lewis: A further supplementary question. The Prices and Incomes Commission is answerable to this Parliament through the minister, not through the Minister of Finance. Therefore may I ask the minister, in view of the activities of the commission which have