

Inquiries of the Ministry

The communiqué tabled today made reference to the efforts that are being made to extend the automotive pact to related industry which would include special replacement parts, special vehicles, tires and tubes. Have the Canadian unions which would be directly affected by such an extension been consulted on it?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, my department has conducted a series of consultations on these matters with both sides of industry. My officials have accumulated knowledge on this subject which will be taken into consideration in assessing the kind of broadening of the agreement we will be seeking.

Mr. Broadbent: In order that I may be clear on this, Mr. Speaker, did I understand the minister to say that the specific proposals which the Canadian government is making were discussed with the Canadian trade unions affected?

Mr. Pepin: I will check to see if this has been done as formally as the hon. member is indicating, but I know there was consultation with the labour as well as the employer side of industry. I have taken part in such consultations myself on some occasions.

Mr. Broadbent: As a further supplementary question, if the minister should discover that these specific proposals have not been discussed with the trade unions will he assure the house that they will be?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would think the question is hypothetical.

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): As a further supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, may I ask the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce whether there were any discussions regarding the disparity between Canada and the United States in consumer prices for cars, and did the Canadian government make any proposals on how to bring about greater uniformity in prices on both sides of the border, in view of the fact that the auto companies may now move goods across the border without paying any duty?

Mr. Pepin: Mr. Speaker, I have already indicated that the idea of reducing that disparity is one of the objectives of the Canadian government, but in answer to written and oral questions I have also indicated that this is only one of many factors that have to be

[Mr. Broadbent.]

borne in mind in making discussions on these matters.

Mr. Speaker, just to come back to the previous question asked by the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby, consultation on these matters cannot come to a conclusion with everybody in total agreement. I recall that some people who were opposed to the automobile agreement in the first place are now exporting 60 per cent to 65 per cent of their production to the United States.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, the minister says that uniformity of consumer prices of cars was one of the objectives of the agreement? Since this objective has certainly not been reached, has the minister set any tentative date when he hopes to reach this objective?

Mr. Pepin: It has not been reached but the disparity has been regularly reduced.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

FREEZE IN TRACKER AIRCRAFT OVERHAUL

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Dartmouth-Halifax East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for whichever minister is in the house today answering on behalf of the Minister of National Defence, who was slated to be here, or in his absence whichever minister is supposed to answer for the Minister of Supply and Services, who was also slated to be here today, and is not. In light of the assurances given to the house less than a week ago by the Minister of National Defence that there would be no significant cut-backs in spending within maritime command without prior notice and consultation with the communities involved, can the minister answering today explain to the house and to the people of Dartmouth why there has been a freeze imposed on the Tracker aircraft overhaul and repair program?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister without Portfolio): Mr. Speaker, I will be glad to bring the hon. member's question to the attention of the Minister of Supply and Services.

Mr. Forrestall: When the minister is doing that will he bring to the attention of his other colleagues in the cabinet the fact that a very grave disservice was done to the house, in the light of the minister's assurance that there would be no cut-backs and the fact that cut-backs of a significant nature have followed within three or four days of the minister's announcement?