

Canada-U.S. Automotive Agreement

Mr. Moreau: Would the hon. Member agree that the high rate of return on the Canadian operation is a direct result of the subsidy which exists in the form of import duties?

Mr. Orlikow: If the hon. Member is asking me do I think the high rate of return is due to the fact that the Canadian subsidiaries of the companies I have mentioned can hide behind the tariff, I am inclined to agree with him. But he should not ask me that question. He should ask the Minister of Industry. He should ask the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gordon), who can deal with that very easily by reducing the tariff if the companies reduce their prices.

Mr. Moreau: As a supplementary question, if the hon. Member agrees that the tariff is a form of subsidy, how can he—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Member rising to ask a supplementary question?

Mr. Moreau: Yes—how can he then argue that the removal of the import duties is a subsidy for the companies?

Mr. Douglas: It is not removed for everybody; it is only for the companies. It is a handout for the companies.

Mr. Orlikow: My contention is that while this agreement protects the companies, which need no protection, against any difficulties they may have, it does not protect the workers at all.

Without quoting exactly, and just giving the gist of what he said, yesterday the Minister said these were only fears we were expressing. Today I was told that at the meeting which the auto workers had with the Government, at which were present the Minister of Industry the Minister of Labour (Mr. MacEachen), the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Martin) who is, of course, the hon. Member for Windsor, by some strange coincidence representatives of the Ford Company were there and indicated there would not be less than between 1,500 to 1,600 workers laid off as a result of the changes which it would be necessary to make in order to take advantage of this agreement. I am further told that in the presence of the Minister a Ford representative assured the workers that no worker would be laid off for longer than 32 weeks.

This may not seem very serious for people like the Minister and I who, so long as we are here, get our pay cheques every month; but I am sure the hon. Member for Essex West

(Mr. Gray) could tell the Minister, if he does not already know it, that it is a very serious matter to a worker to be laid off for 32 weeks, and this is precisely what we are concerned about at this stage.

I notice the hon. Member for York-Scarborough (Mr. Moreau) seems to have left his seat. I was told this morning that at the Ford plant in Oakville, only four employees out of 97 are to remain in one office department, that 93 were offered the choice of moving to Detroit or Windsor at the end of this month, or being laid off, that 40 have availed themselves of this choice, which is a pretty serious step, and that the balance will have their employment terminated.

This is the kind of thing about which we on this side of the House and the representatives of the auto workers are concerned, the auto workers about whom the hon. Member for Essex West spoke so approvingly, but so conveniently did not advance one of the ideas which they had proposed to the Government. It is something to which the Minister has not replied, and the Minister of Labour, who has such a great opinion of the working people, has been conspicuous by his silence in this debate. We have learned to expect sweet words and no action from him.

Yesterday the Leader of the N.D.P. approvingly quoted a suggestion made by Mr. Woodcock, Vice President of the United Automobile Workers Union. We are not ashamed of quoting Americans if they have good ideas, and we are prepared to listen to them. I now wish to quote from a statement made by the President of the United Automobile Workers Union, Mr. Walter Reuther, on January 16 last.

Mr. Moreau: You are talking in circles.

Mr. Orlikow: Of course everybody who disagrees with the Government is talking in circles, whether they be hon. Members in opposition or representatives of labour unions.

Mr. Douglas: It is better than some who do not talk at all.

Mr. Orlikow: I want to quote what Mr. Reuther said on January 16:

We in the U.A.W. are pleased that an agreement has been worked out by the U.S. and Canadian Governments to provide for a common market in automobiles and parts.

We have long favoured trade liberalization and expansion and we have advocated for many years the creation of such a common market.

We are confident that a rational division of labour in the production of autos and parts as between the United States and Canada will prove