

## Oral Questions

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

## TRADE

## CANADA-UNITED STATES AUTO PACT—INDICATION OF U.S. ATTEMPT TO ABROGATE—CANADIAN PROPOSALS FOR MODIFICATION—PRESERVATION OF SAFEGUARDS

**Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce arising out of one of our concerns about the future of employment in the country. We were pleased to see the improved figures for March.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Stanfield:** Mr. Speaker, the concern arises from the revelation that there may very well be an effort on the part of the United States Senate to abrogate the auto pact between our two countries. I should like to ask the minister whether he has presented to the United States government or any of its officials a proposal to modify the auto pact?

**Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce):** Mr. Speaker, a couple of weeks ago I had discussions with Secretary Shultz about a number of outstanding matters of mutual interest to our two countries, bilateral matters and multilateral matters. In the course of these talks we also had an exploratory exchange with respect to improvements that might be made in the auto pact.

**Mr. Stanfield:** In view of the assurances the minister has given both inside and outside the House that changes in the pact with regard to the safeguards would be made only if they were improvements, can the minister give the assurance to the House that any proposals he has made do in fact constitute improvements in the protection afforded to the automotive industry in Canada?

**Mr. Gillespie:** Mr. Speaker, on earlier occasions I have given assurances to the House that if there are changes which can be mutually agreed upon they will only be agreed upon from our point of view if they provide some kind of built-in mechanism so that we can have our fair share of the production of North American vehicles consistent with article 1 of the auto pact.

## CANADA-UNITED STATES AUTO PACT—REQUEST FOR REFERENCE TO COMMITTEE

**Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition):** In view of the vagueness of the minister's assurances and in view of the ominous situation that seems to exist in the United States Senate, would the minister and the government agree to the automotive agreement being referred to a committee of the House to, among other things, review the positions of the two countries in the negotiations and to assess the operation or effectiveness of the agreement as well as the desirability of retaining and improving the present safeguards in the agreement? Will the minister agree to a reference to a committee for this purpose and others?

[Mr. Speaker.]

**Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce):** Mr. Speaker, I do not feel that at this particular moment a reference to a committee would be in the best interests of the House or the Canadian people.

**An hon. Member:** Why?

**Mr. Gillespie:** For one very good reason. As I have indicated before, in talks of this kind I think we are more likely to be able to make useful progress if the negotiations or discussions do not take place in public.

**Mr. Baldwin:** You have not been doing too well so far.

**Mr. Terry O'Connor (Halton):** I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In view of the tremendous importance and the significant value to this country of the auto pact, would the minister consider or agree to the referral mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition provided that consideration were in camera before the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs?

**Mr. Gillespie:** Mr. Speaker, I would expect that there would be other opportunities to discuss the operation of the auto pact when my main estimates are called again. I believe that I will be meeting with the committee early in May and of course it will be the committee's decision whether they want to raise this matter with me at that time.

## CANADA-UNITED STATES AUTO PACT—CANADIAN PROPOSALS

**Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby):** I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Putting aside the question of general benefit to Canada that the government may or may not be trying to obtain in negotiations, I should like to ask the minister specifically whether the government of Canada has proposed the removal of the 15 per cent duty requirement that consumers must pay if they bring a car in from the United States? If it has made that specific proposal, has it attached to that the requirement that the production level safeguards in the pact must be maintained?

● (1440)

**Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce):** Mr. Speaker, I am, perhaps, repeating myself when I say that these were exploratory talks.

**Mr. Broadbent:** Answer the question.

**Mr. Gillespie:** It would be overstating it to say that that proposal had been made, but I can assure the hon. member that if there are any changes agreed to, as I have already indicated on past occasions, they will only be agreed to if there is a mechanism to protect existing and future Canadian jobs based on article 1 of the agreement itself.

## CANADA-UNITED STATES AUTO PACT—REPRESENTATIONS TO AMERICAN SENATORS THROUGH CANADIAN EMBASSY

**Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby):** I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact