

Committee Procedure

vicious parliaments. It is a very familiar concern with hon. members such as those who have participated in the discussion this afternoon, who are attempting conscientiously to fulfil all of the obligations placed upon them, and who find carrying the workload both in the House and in committee impossible at times.

While I think hon. members express a concern that is deeply felt, at one and the same time I am sure they will realize that the provisions of the Standing Orders are such that standing committees are empowered to sit while the House is in session. I do not say that in order to recommend it or to comment on its advisability; everyone knows the difficulties that this creates. I say it only because it concerns my jurisdiction in terms of attempting to make any order which may or may not determine when House committees can sit.

I hope that there are channels through which this kind of problem can be settled. It is certainly a matter for settlement among those who are ordinarily charged with some responsibility for coming to some agreement as to the progress of business through the House. The good will that attends discussions and arrangements is essential to orderly proceedings, and it is hoped that following the remarks of the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp) the good will that has prevailed in the past will not fail us at a time when there is so much important business before the House.

It is difficult to see an area in which my authority could extend to make any other arrangements. However, I hope consideration will be given to this in the negotiations.

Though this is not meant in any way to diminish the importance of the subject matters that may be discussed on these days, it has already been noted that there are quite a number of opposition days remaining. If it becomes necessary to have extended sittings of the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs in respect to this very important bill, it might be that those days ought to be pre-empted for committee sittings of that sort in order not to conflict any more than is necessary. However, these are only reflections. If the Chair can be of any assistance in the negotiations, as always I am more than ready to assist; but I am reluctant to enter with any authority an area where the Standing Orders do not at this moment appear to give authority.

Mr. Woolliams: Mr. Speaker, on a point of privilege, the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp) said I was unjustified in raising this. I would bring to his attention, through you, Sir, that at this very moment the debate on the abolition of capital punishment is about to recommence and there is a committee meeting being called. That is the reason I raised the point. I do not think I was unjustified; I think I had a proper and necessary grievance. As far as I am concerned, he is imputing motives. I did this because I believe I have to do the work for my constituency and for the opposition so far as justice affairs are concerned. I appreciate your sympathetic viewpoint. I only hope that the President of the Privy Council is as sympathetic as Your Honour and not as wishy-washy as he always is.

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, the reason I felt it unjustified is that I had called a meeting of House leaders for this afternoon and it would have been only courteous to have laid this complaint before his House leader so he could have talked to me about it.

[Mr. Speaker.]

[Translation]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

(Questions answered orally are indicated by an asterisk.)

Mr. J.-J. Blais (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: 4,956, 5,103, 5,147 and 5,196.

I ask, Mr. Speaker, that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

[Text]

AUTOMOBILE WARRANTIES

Question No. 4,956—Mr. Rodriguez:

1. Did the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs request automobile companies operating in Canada to provide it with copies of all hidden, secret or good-will warranties on their products sold in Canada in the past ten years, and (a) if not, for what reason (b) if so, what are the names of the companies which provided copies of their good-will warranties and, in each case (i) in what years (ii) for what models (iii) for what particular work?

2. Did the Department or any agency of the Department receive requests for information on hidden or goodwill warranties and, if so (a) how many (b) what information was provided and did it include copies of specific hidden or good-will warranty programmes of automobile companies?

3. Did the Automobile Protection Association provide the Department with copies of any hidden or good-will warranty programmes of Canada's automobile companies and, if so (a) on how many companies was such information provided (b) on what dates?

4. Did the Department send copies of such documents to enquiring consumers and, if not, for what reason?

5. (a) How many persons are working for the recently created automotive section of the Department (b) was particular automotive knowledge and/or experience a prerequisite for being employed (c) what other criteria were necessary for employment (d) what are the functions of the section?

6. Has the Department consulted with the APA in its attempts to deal with the problems of hidden or good-will warranties, given their expertise in this area?

7. What action has the Department taken on a complaint made two years ago by the APA concerning advertising by STP for oil and gas additives and is any action contemplated?

Mr. Art Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): 1. The former Minister did request this information from the automobile manufacturers and distributors in Canada. In general, the response was that internal company documents would be provided to the Department only on the condition that they remain confidential. This restrictive condition was not acceptable to the Minister, and he was not in a position to insist on its removal.

2. The existence of unpublicized post-warranty adjustment programs not made available to all owners became a subject of public concern in March, 1975. From that time until mid-March of 1976, the Department received over 400 enquiries relating to automobile warranties. In addition, the disclosure to the public of these programs resulted in more than 2,000 complaints alleging premature failure of vehicles or components, and seeking compensation. To consumers who contact the Department concerning automobile problems, officers provide copies of documents provided by the Automobile Protection Association which pertain to the specific problems experienced by the con-