

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): To the inquiry as to whether I would make a statement I replied "no". The hon. member then asked whether I would make an inquiry to see if any such directive had been issued by the treasury board. I have done so and, Mr. Speaker, no such directive has been issued by the treasury board. The matter has not been before the treasury board. However, on further inquiry I found that a directive was issued by the government motor vehicle committee, which is an interdepartmental committee.

I concluded, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. member's question was prompted by a question and answer in the standing committee on estimates on May 10, and here I think the former deputy minister of national health and welfare, now the deputy minister of citizenship and immigration, spoke under a misunderstanding. In that respect he was asked as to whether—

Mr. Pickersgill: I am rising on a point of order. Surely it is contrary to the rules of this house to refer to the proceedings—more particularly to quote the proceedings—of a committee before that committee has made a report.

Mr. Chevrier: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): Let me make clear at once that I have no intention of reading the proceedings of the committee; I was simply wishing to point out at the present time what appeared to be the origin of the misapprehension of the hon. member for Essex East in this respect. In fairness to him I think the misapprehension was based upon—

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Don't worry about the member for Essex East.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): —the statement made by the deputy minister, which was not quite accurate; and, as we all know, the deputy minister would not intentionally make an inaccurate statement. I would want to say that—

Mr. Speaker: In order to dispose of the point of order, it is not usual to refer to or use or quote in the house the proceedings of a committee until it has reported. I dare say the minister will be able to deal with the matter without doing so.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): Yes. I have indicated the reason for this passing reference, Mr. Speaker. As far as the contents of the directive are concerned, perhaps I should say it indicated that departments should give serious consideration to the use of compact

cars, that is to say the new small cars, in place of larger cars where the smaller cars may serve the purposes of departments.

The hon. member for Essex East then proceeded to ask this question:

Will the minister see that the direction is negated at once, because obviously it is at serious variance with the interests of Canadian workers?

I think the hon. gentleman is under a misapprehension. This directive is not applicable to imported compact cars. It applies to compact cars of Canadian manufacture, so it cannot be said that the directive does any harm to Canadian workers employed in the automobile industry. It is intended that departments should examine the possibility of achieving economies in the purchase price and cost of operation of motor cars where it is found that the smaller or compact cars will meet their requirements.

Mr. Chevrier: Mr. Speaker—

Hon. Paul Martin (Essex East): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In view of the statement made by the Minister of Finance in his compact reply, may I ask the Postmaster General to explain why, in the light of this answer, a foreign-made truck carries the mail from the Ottawa post office to Uplands airport?

Hon. W. M. Hamilton (Postmaster General): Such transport is done by contract with an independent trucking company, which is quite free to use the vehicles it has in its service.

Mr. Chevrier: Mr. Speaker, my only purpose in rising a moment ago was to ask whether the 40-minute rule applies to ministers answering questions.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. E. J. Broome (Vancouver South): I should like to direct a supplementary question to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Speaker: Would the hon. member for Vancouver South begin again, please? I think the first part of his question was lost.

Mr. Broome: I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Finance. With regard to the best interests of Canadian workers and the purchase of automobiles, will the minister take into consideration the fact that the province of British Columbia is dependent to a great extent upon export trade, and that the interests of our workers are just as important as the interests of the workers in Windsor or Oshawa?

Mr. Benidickson: Some Japanese trade, too.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member has produced an argument, but not at the right time or place.