

Mr. Hales: Mr. Speaker, my point of privilege, and I think it affects every member of the House, is that the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce advised the House on March 17 that the American car manufacturers, according to information that he had received from them, would not, had not and were not using the DISC program. Now we are advised that they have been using the DISC program since December. These American car manufacturers have misled the minister or given him the wrong information. I think it behooves the minister to advise the House accordingly and require an apology from the American car manufacturers in this regard.

• (1130)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. That, of course, is not a question of privilege. The hon. member for Lambton-Kent has a supplementary.

UNITED STATES DISC PROGRAM—FORMAL DISCUSSIONS WITH AUTO MANUFACTURERS—SUGGESTED REMOVAL OF EXCISE TAX ON CERTAIN OFFSHORE AUTOMOBILE IMPORTS

Mr. Mac T. McCutcheon (Lambton-Kent): Mr. Speaker, many questions have been asked but I should like the minister to clarify whether formal talks on this matter are being organized with the United States branch plants that are operating in Canada.

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, in answer to a previous question I said that I would be giving all the information I have on the subject, as I usually do, in the coming days. I suggested this might take place during the budget speech. Obviously, before making these remarks I will want to have optimum information. Optimum information obviously implies a meeting between the gentlemen mentioned, the heads of the Canadian manufacturing companies, and myself in order to obtain all the information possible.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Many supplementaries are being sought. For the moment the Chair will recognize the hon. member for Lambton-Kent on his supplementary and then we will determine whether we should try for two minutes to give other members a chance to ask questions subject to returning to this matter later.

Mr. McCutcheon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the minister for clarifying the matter as far as the companies are concerned. However, my concern is for the Canadian consumer. Therefore my question is whether the government would consider dropping the 12 per cent excise tax on low and medium-value automobiles imported from offshore—I do not mean luxury cars—so that Canadian consumers as well as automobile manufacturers could get a break?

Mr. Pepin: Mr. Speaker, I am quite sure the Minister of Finance would be pleased to send to my hon. friend a list of all the categories of producers and people in Canada who have asked for similar advantage, that is, the exemption of the 12 per cent tax.

Inquiries of the Ministry

UNITED STATES DISC PROGRAM—INTENTION OF CAR MANUFACTURERS RESPECTING USE THEREOF AND REDUCTION OF PRICES IN CANADA

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, the minister knows there is sophistry as well as sophistication. I should like to ask the minister for specific answers to the questions I put earlier today on the need for direct discussion by him with the heads of the automobile companies on their intentions. I should like to get answers to the following questions and not impressions. Do they intend to use the DISC legislation not just to maximize their profit position but to increase the percentage of their sales in Canada in terms of American produced automobiles as opposed to Canadian produced automobiles? Let us have a specific answer to that specific question. Second, do they intend to do something soon about reducing the prices of automobiles to the Canadian consumer? Would the minister do that within the next ten days?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): I will try hard, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I will recognize the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands in a moment but for the time being the hon. member for Vegreville has a supplementary.

UNITED STATES DISC PROGRAM—INVESTIGATION OF EFFECTS ON INDUSTRIES IN GENERAL

Mr. Don Mazankowski (Vegreville): I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. In view of the revelation that auto manufacturers are now using the DISC program, is the minister now going to investigate actively the utilization of this program by other industries, which may be detrimental to Canadian interests?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, I have already said that we have a group in the government administration doing exactly that. It is trying to get all the information possible on the effects the DISC program will have on Canada. I also said this morning that the Minister of Finance, with the government, will see what the best answer to this would be.

UNITED STATES DISC PROGRAM—INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION TO OFFSET EFFECTS

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that about a month ago the government leader in the Senate stated, in a speech in Washington, that the Canadian government had detailed legislation ready to deal with DISC if it became apparent that it was going to be widely used with respect to exports to Canada, I want to ask the minister whether such legislation has been prepared and does the government intend to introduce it? In view of the fact that apparently the United States government is now embarking on a trade war, what steps does the minister intend to take, what legislation does he intend to introduce, and how soon?