

*Canada-U.S. Automotive Agreement*

had a succession of ministers visiting us trying to explain what a great thing the auto parts treaty is for this country. First of all the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Benson) visited us last year and read a very interesting prepared speech, although he did not seem prepared at that time to answer any questions on it. Recently the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources (Mr. Laing) visited us and told us what a great thing the automotive parts treaty is. The Minister of Industry himself was in my area during the last election explaining briefly what a good thing the treaty is. The former minister of mines and technical surveys was down there too. We have had a succession of cabinet members, some of them fairly senior, visiting the area and trying to explain to the people who will be put out of work because the plant was being put out of commission that, after all, this treaty was a great thing for Canada. So obviously, Mr. Speaker, this has been a matter of some concern and worry to the government.

• (8:30 p.m.)

There are a number of other items which I could mention at this time, but these have been covered by other members, the member for Wellington South (Mr. Hales) and the member for Danforth (Mr. Scott), and I see no point in repetition. However, there is one thing I would like to say to the minister, and I hope he can see his way clear to agree to this. It is this, that the minister himself pointed out in his remarks, when the resolution was presented, that the government is of course very interested, as is everybody else, in the effects of this treaty on Canada and on Canadian industry.

While it is true that a number of representations have been made to the government pointing out the difficulties which a number of firms are encountering in this regard, I would hope that the minister would see fit to refer this treaty to the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy Development, because I believe that is the committee that would be concerned. In this way an opportunity could be given to a number of manufacturers who have been perhaps adversely affected by the treaty, and they could give evidence as to the way they are having difficulties. This would be very helpful to the minister and his officials when the treaty is reviewed in a year or two from now, as the minister indicated earlier it would be.

The automotive parts industry and related industries in this country from which

parts are ordered would then have a feeling of participation in the government handling of this matter. I can see no disadvantage from the government's point of view in permitting this treaty to be considered by such a committee, so that witnesses from the auto parts industry as well as others can be called. Indeed the committee should have power to call any witness who could be helpful. Some of the complaints which have been registered may not be legitimate, and I believe that all members in this house are interested in getting to the bottom of this matter and getting all the facts.

As the member for Wellington South and others, pointed out, this is perhaps one of the most important treaties or international arrangements that Canada has ever entered into. This agreement has long-range economic effects on Canada and I can see no harm in its being referred to a committee which could hear representations. This is something which we are all interested in. It has gone on for 15 months and another month or so would make little difference. I believe everyone would be greatly benefited by an opportunity to hear evidence.

I would very much hope that the minister would give consideration to referring this treaty to a committee. In conclusion I have but one other brief observation. It was pointed out by the minister in his early remarks that one of the hopes of the treaty was that Canadian auto parts manufacturers would have an opportunity to compete in the United States market—not only in the United States market but in the continental market as a whole. I believe that this is a most commendable idea. However, as I mentioned briefly a few moments ago, and I would like to reiterate it at this point, this is simply not working out. The large automobile companies, and again I mention particularly the Chrysler Corporation and the Ford Motor Company, have large numbers of wholly owned subsidiaries in the United States. I have been informed that when very efficient Canadian auto parts manufacturers—and I refer to the Ingersoll Machine and Tool Company, for one—have requested an opportunity to tender on some of the auto parts for these large companies, they were simply told: You cannot even tender on these contracts; we have our wholly owned subsidiaries in the United States, so why should we allow any other firm to offer tenders because we will get them from our wholly owned subsidiaries.