

Inquiries of the Ministry

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Has-tings): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a supplementary question to the Acting Prime Minister. In view of conditions existing in the Canadian Post Office today, as described by the Postmaster General over the weekend, is it any wonder that there is an impending strike, a strike which has every possibility of taking place?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I doubt whether the question as asked is in order.

[Translation]

POSSIBLE NATIONAL STRIKE—DELIVERY OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE CHEQUES

Mr. René Matte (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask the Acting Prime Minister a question.

In view of the fact that the government has decided to send out the social security cheques early because a postal strike is threatening, what decision has been taken concerning unemployment insurance benefits for current or future recipients?

[English]

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, this matter was looked into very carefully. It was decided that at least those payments that are handled entirely by mail and would be difficult to handle otherwise should be forwarded by an early mailing. We looked at the other question but decided it was not possible to deal with it in the same way.

INDUSTRY

U.S.-CANADA AUTOMOBILE PACT—DISCUSSION OF ALTERATIONS IN LIGHT OF CANADIAN ACTION

Mr. A. D. Hales (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce about the United States-Canada automobile pact. Have the minister or any members of his department had recent discussions with United States officials concerning alterations to the terms of the pact supposedly in retaliation for certain things that Canada has done?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, there have been extensive discussions with U.S. officials on the auto pact for a number of months now, but no threats have ever been made, no intimidation of the type referred to in the articles to which the hon. member

obviously refers have taken place. Besides if the pact were to be abrogated, notification of one year would have to be given by either government wanting to do so. I do not think any suspicion should be entertained that the United States government intends to take any such action as was imputed to it in some press reports.

Mr. Hales: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Have leading officials of the United States asked Canada to suspend the pact for two years?

Mr. Pepin: Mr. Speaker, mention was made by United States officials that the U.S. government would very much welcome an elimination, temporary or permanent, of two of the safeguards, the ratio and the Canadian value added.

Mr. J. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to interrupt the minister in his full flight of oratory, but may I ask him a supplementary question. Would he assure the House that any guarantees which already exist in the pact in the form of protection for Canada will not be changed?

Mr. Pepin: I do not think that one's mind should be petrified on this subject, or any other one for that matter.

INFORMATION CANADA

INVESTIGATION OF DIRECTOR'S BACKGROUND

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): I have a question for the Acting Prime Minister. Has he received any report in connection with the investigation of the background of Mr. Jean-Louis Gagnon, a matter that was before the House some weeks ago?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Has there been no investigation? I further ask the minister, in view of the amount of mail that is now coming in—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Diefenbaker: It takes longer but we get it none the less. In view of the amount of mail that is now being received in connection with the chronological background and biography of that gentleman which, if untrue, would make the senders of that mail criminally liable to prosecution and punishment, will the minister consider giving Mr. Gagnon an opportunity to appear before a committee