



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ACIS ADMINISTRATION BILL 1999
Consideration in Detail
SPEECH

Monday, 28 June 1999

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Cox, David, MP

Source House
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Mr COX (Kingston) (8.00 pm)—Since I last spoke on the ACIS Administration Bill 1999, to which the member for Fraser had moved an amendment, a couple of sitting days have elapsed. I was interrupted then just before question time, and during question time the Treasurer felt the need to attack me for calling for a Productivity Commission inquiry into the car industry. It seems that the Treasurer of the Commonwealth of Australia, while he loves the Productivity Commission and indeed was instrumental in setting it up and drawing together various government bodies, including the Industry Commission, to constitute the new Productivity Commission—

Mr Emerson—He doesn't want it to inquire into anything.

Mr COX—The member for Rankin is exactly right. He does not want it to inquire into things that he thinks will cause him difficulty. Instead, he wants a quick and dirty internal inquiry to decide what the tariff regime is going to be after the year 2005 and to decide what assistance the car industry is going to receive when the ACIS arrangements expire. They are called transitional arrangements—they have a cap on them of \$2 billion, and they are going to expire in 2005. It is an heroic assumption to suggest that a quick and dirty internal inquiry, probably done by Treasury with as limited inputs as they can tolerate from Senator Minchin's department, will come out with the sorts of arrangements that the car industry will need post 2005.

The parliamentary secretary who was at the table last time I was speaking suggested that a full-scale inquiry would create uncertainty. I simply cannot see how a quick and dirty internal inquiry can do other than cause great uncertainty—people will not understand the process, people will not have the opportunity to make the sorts of inputs that you are able to in a proper inquiry, there will not be a draft report, there will not be the opportunity for feedback; it will just be whatever the government thinks is a convenient thing for it at the time. We do not know when they are going to do it. The industry will be left in a great deal of uncertainty by this refusal to have a proper full-scale inquiry into the car industry before there is any further phasing down in tariffs.