

Oral Questions

contained in the bills before the House. It is my colleague's hope that these will be through committee of the whole at least within the next day or so and we can get on to the equally urgent questions regarding income tax. I could perhaps give consideration to whether the final stages of the bill will get through before the minister's statement, but even there I do not think there is that vital connection between the two issues that would dictate a postponement.

POSSIBLE GOVERNMENT GUIDELINES ON PURCHASE OF VEHICLES AND CONSERVATION OF GASOLINE

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): I thought it might give the government some incentive to bring forward its conservation policy, which is surely a matter of great urgency. May I ask the government House leader or the Minister of Supply and Services whether the government has itself adopted any guidelines or rules with regard to the purchase of vehicles and the conservation of gasoline? For example, does the Minister of Supply and Services now have authority to impose on other departments conservation rules with regard to the purchase of vehicles? Has the government adopted any conservation policy of its own?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Pierre Goyer (Minister of Supply and Services): Mr. Speaker, my colleague the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has alerted us on that matter. We are negotiating with different governmental departments to develop a plan prepared by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and enable us to draft an effective conservation program in Canada.

● (1420)

[English]

POSSIBLE INCREASE IN PRICE OF DOMESTIC OIL AND MANDATORY MEASURES TO REDUCE CONSUMPTION

Mr. Gordon Ritchie (Dauphin): A supplementary to the Acting Prime Minister: is the government considering increasing the price of domestic oil as a means of reducing the consumption of this particular form of energy?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): If such a decision were made it would be announced in the House.

Mr. Ritchie: Since Canadian oil supplies are likely to be deficient in the very near future, is the government considering mandatory measures designed to reduce energy consumption, or does it intend to rely on persuasion?

Mr. Sharp: The hon. member will have to await the statement of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

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INDUSTRY

AUTOMOBILES—GOVERNMENT ACTION TO DEAL WITH LAY-OFFS OF WORKERS

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Industry, Trade

[Mr. Sharp.]

and Commerce arising from lay-offs in the auto industry announced during the weekend which bring the total number of unemployed in that industry to as high as 40,000 according to some estimates. Could the minister inform the House whether the government is considering any specific program to deal with this extremely serious situation?

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): I agree with the hon. member that this is a very serious situation. I have kept very close to it. I have met with parts manufacturers, representatives of the unions and others in the industry. The fact is that there are presently about 13,000 workers on indefinite lay-off—this may last for a period of four weeks—and 14,000 workers on temporary lay-off.

An hon. Member: Now tell us the good news!

Mr. Gillespie: At the end of last week I talked to one of the major automobile manufacturers, particularly about the initiative which has been taken in this country and in the United States. I gained some encouragement from the fact that the measures taken here in Canada and in the United States—I am talking about price discounts—have already had a favourable effect, particularly south of the border. I think all hon. members will recognize that the United States market is the major market for the output of Canadian factories.

Mr. Broadbent: Since approximately 18 per cent of those employed in the parts sector of the industry are now laid off, permanently or otherwise, can the minister tell us whether or not the government intends to take specific action to preserve jobs in that sector?

Mr. Gillespie: I think the parts industry has been the hardest hit segment of the auto industry in Canada. We have taken a number of measures over the past year in an effort to provide new export opportunities to parts manufacturers in this country. These efforts have met with some success and there is promise of further success.

AUTOMOBILES—PROPOSED REMOVAL OF SALES TAX CONDITIONAL UPON PRICE REDUCTION

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): The minister has referred to a reduction of prices by the automobile companies on both sides of the border. What he did not mention was that the differential still remains. Would the government seriously consider the removing of federal sales tax on automobiles for a one year period on the condition that the automotive companies bring down their prices to dealers in Canada to the levels charged to their dealers in the United States?

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): There has been a steady narrowing of the price gap, as the hon. member knows, and, as he also knows, questions with respect to sales tax should be directed to the Minister of Finance.