

the terms of the motion. The minister will want to take that into account.

● (2040)

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, that question has been occupying my mind all day. In response to the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath), if he had talked to those in the farming community of Ontario, as I have, and to his colleague the hon. member for Kent-Essex (Mr. Danforth), he would not say to the farm community, which is responsible for providing food supplies to the Canadian market, that the cost of petroleum products is an irrelevant question. I am not talking about cooking oil. He would not say to the hon. member for Kent-Essex, nor to the Ontario greenhouse growers, that the cost of oil is an irrelevant question.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): I am sure the greenhouse growers would say to him, in language which I could not reproduce and which could probably only be matched by the Minister of Agriculture or the hon. member for St. John's East himself, that the question of petroleum costs is one of the most important from the standpoint of producers and one of the most relevant when talking about production.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): In my part of the country and in other parts it is not only a question of heating oil for winter producers of tomatoes and other vegetables; it is also a question of an industry that has become more highly mechanized over the years. Petroleum is a very important expenditure in their total current budget. Therefore, I think it is important that we reflect on the impact of this particular part of the cost package the farmer has to face. The cost package the farmer, like all producers, has to face is in due course passed on to the customers and is ultimately reflected in food prices in Canada.

It was in light of this feeling and the feeling of the Ontario farm communities that we were pleased on that day to be able to gratify the greenhouse growers, mushroom growers and others. While they would be facing difficulties this winter in signing contracts for fuel or heavy oil, due to the increase in oil costs heretofore the government had taken the step to put a restraint on oil prices until the end of January so that at the same time it might take action to dissociate the very substantial increase which for domestic reasons in the United States has been forcing up the price of oil in that country. We wanted to dissociate that from prices in Canada.

I might say this proposal has run into some opposition. It has, of course, run into opposition from the producers of oil, and the government of Alberta. The substance of it has not run into opposition. I have yet to hear such an argument articulated. It has certainly not been argued by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) or any of his followers that 30 per cent is not enough for the oil companies.

Indeed, if one looks at the argument of the Leader of the Opposition and his followers, including the hon. member

Food Prices

for Prince Edward-Hastings (Mr. Hees) and the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams)—unfortunately, neither is here this evening—one would find that instead of being prepared to deal with the substance of the question of how much is enough when it comes to oil prices, they have been arguing around the periphery. They have been arguing the minutiae of procedure, not the substance or whether the Canadian consumer is paying too much. They argue about whether enough notice was given to the United States or whether there were consultations with Alberta. In other words, they have evaded the basic question of whether the member for Calgary South (Mr. Bawden) and the Leader of the Opposition think that real oil prices should be restrained in this country, and whether we should shift from a single price system to a two-price system so that the problems of the United States market are not automatically translated into our own.

Mr. Bawden: What happened to the energy report?

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): The hon. member for Calgary South asks what happened to the energy report. I think I am right in saying he was not here today when I had an opportunity to deal with this question.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have to take exception to the line of approach adopted by the minister. I have some qualms as to whether what he is saying is within the terms of reference of the committee which considered food prices. As I said a moment ago—I appreciate I may be saying this facetiously—what we are considering at the present time is a report on food prices. I wonder whether the debate on energy, the supply of oil from Alberta and the related problems which were debated heatedly during the question period ought to be included in the debate we are having at the present time. This point was made by the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) a moment ago. I feel he had a good point.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, I made a very careful study of the parliamentary precedents in this regard. I focused in particular on a very interesting debate in the fall of 1962 when the then hon. member for Stormont-Dundas advanced some very cogent arguments with regard to harbours, with particular relation to Cornwall harbour. I have been trying to emulate—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. My recollection is that the hon. member was ruled out of order and sat down.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, I have been reflecting on this question throughout the day. While the fine, red thread of relevance seems very clear to me, I thought it might not be so obvious to other members of the House. On another occasion, and perhaps outside the House, I will have an opportunity to talk about these questions, particularly the consultations which took place with the United States State Department.

I am glad to see the hon. member for Calgary North is here now. I have reason to believe I will have an early opportunity to talk about the discussions with the government of Alberta. Therefore, I will direct myself to the question of farm prices and the cost to farmers. I hope we