

Oral Questions

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Well, Madam Speaker, I think that I was totally right because I do not believe either the hon. member's question or my answer saw the light of day in any place except the report of the committee, which will come out in several weeks.

Miss Carney: The Minister of Finance has more confidence in committee reports than I do. I was talking about the judgment of the Minister, and obviously his judgment was wrong.

CAPITAL COST ALLOWANCES

Miss Pat Carney (Vancouver Centre): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question deals with the changes which the minister announced yesterday in his continuing budget striptease. I understand that the changes he announced yesterday bring to about 28 the number of changes that have been made. He is offering tax relief to people buying small tools, metric scales, uniforms, bed linen, and even encouraging the purchase of art by dead Canadians as well as living Canadians. In view of the terrible economic conditions, when will the minister replace these small change items with some big ticket changes to capital cost allowances to encourage the construction of new plant and equipment and to revive job opportunities in the Canadian economy?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the hon. member belittles the changes which were made in the capital cost allowance. I advise her that these changes are regarded as important by those who have requested that they be made, including a large number of members of the House of Commons and representatives of private industry. Perhaps the hon. member ought to inform herself more clearly on this matter, as well as the fact that her question and my answer yesterday were not reported anywhere that I could see and, therefore, had absolutely no effect upon international currency exchange markets.

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DISASTERS

NEW BRUNSWICK FORESTRY FIRE—MILITARY ASSISTANCE

Mr. Maurice Harquail (Restigouche): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Defence. It concerns the raging forest fire in New Brunswick. I wonder whether the minister could inform the House what type of assistance the military might be prepared to give, and whether indeed it is providing any assistance—

Mr. Fraser: Send the navy.

Mr. Harquail: This is a serious question. The hon. member for Vancouver South should appreciate that forest matters and forest products are very important to the economy.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Harquail: Madam Speaker, while I am on my feet, and without further interruptions, I wonder whether I could learn from the Minister of National Defence just what assistance the military might be able to provide, with manpower and equipment, to contain this fire and protect that important natural resource.

● (1440)

Hon. J. Gilles Lamontagne (Minister of National Defence): Madam Speaker, the Armed Forces are in the service of all Canadians. We were notified of the forest fire on Sunday evening and as soon as we were requested by the civil authorities, we supplied all the resources we could. At the moment we have 312 troops there, 56 vehicles, and four helicopters helping the people in the region of Beaverbrook Lake and the Miramichi. We are very glad to do it.

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NATIONAL ENERGY PROGRAM

FEDERAL EXCISE TAX—REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE FOR CONSUMERS

Mr. Ian Waddell (Vancouver-Kingsway): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. The Government of Alberta has given \$5 billion to the oil companies, and the minister's government gave them \$2 billion last night. Is the minister prepared to do something for the consumer? That is all that we are asking him to do, to give a quid pro quo to the consumer. More specifically, is he prepared to review the federal excise tax? He cannot blame Quebec or any other province for the federal excise tax. Second, is he prepared to renegotiate a pause in the increases in oil price that are to happen—approximately 7 cents a gallon in July? Those are two concrete suggestions to help the consumer. Why does he not do something for the consumer, because the National Energy Program is no longer working for the consumer?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, frankly, my hon. friend must not have read the National Energy Program, the agreement of last September, or the document that we released yesterday. The document which was released yesterday indicates that, thanks to the price schedule that is in the National Energy Program, in the agreement with Alberta I should say, and which is in effect at the present time, as an average, between 1981 and 1986, Canadian consumers—every man, woman and child in Canada—are going to save \$2,500 in energy savings because they do not have to pay international prices. This is what this government has achieved. This is what the Canadian consumers will benefit from.

I am afraid that my hon. friend must be wearing blinders day and night if he cannot see that. I must tell him that we will indeed continue to benefit in this country from the lowest