

*Oral Questions*

● (1430)

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Gustafson:** Will the minister take seriously this very important situation which threatens Canadian oil exploration at this time?

**Mr. Lalonde:** Madam Speaker, in his long list of statistics the hon. member said nothing that contradicts what I have already told him, namely, that drilling is up 30 per cent this year compared to the same period last year when the Tories were in office.

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## HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRESENCE IN GALLERY OF DEPUTY PREMIER AND TREASURER  
FOR THE STATE OF VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA

**Madam Speaker:** May I at this point draw the attention of the House to the presence in our gallery of the Honourable Lindsay Thompson, Deputy Premier and Treasurer for the State of Victoria, Australia.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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## CONSUMER AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS

AMENDMENTS TO LEGISLATION TO PREVENT COMBINES

**Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops-Shuswap):** Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. It is of vital importance to consumers and small businessmen across this country.

In light of the recent disclosure that the Hudson's Bay Company and Simpsons Limited are using their combined purchasing power to squeeze volume rebates from small manufacturers and suppliers, and because this practice represents a blatant display of monopoly power that could not only force many manufacturers out of business but also reduce the levels of competition in the marketplace, will the minister inform this House whether or not he will be introducing amendments to the combines legislation that will enable the government to successfully break up a combination like the Hudson's Bay-Sears marketing conglomerate?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Postmaster General):** Madam Speaker, I would like to say two things to the hon. member in that connection. First, I will discuss the matter with the director of investigations and research to determine if the practice described by the hon. member is harmful and comes under the Combines Investigation Act. Second, as soon as possible in one of the next sessions of this Parliament I intend to introduce amend-

ments to the legislation on competition in Canada so that it will have more teeth than the present legislation.

[*English*]

**Mr. Riis:** Madam Speaker, I appreciate hearing the comments of the minister regarding the second phase of the competition policy, and I look forward to debating that. I would like to be a bit more specific, if I could. When the minister receives all the information and it becomes clear to the minister that the Hudson's Bay Company and Simpsons Limited have been pressuring their suppliers for rebates, what action will the minister take to deal specifically with this problem?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Ouellet:** Surely the hon. member will agree that the director of investigations has limited powers to act under the present legislation, especially as a result of a recent Supreme Court decision. Consequently it is premature for me to predict what the director of investigations might suggest after having examined that file.

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[*English*]

## ENERGY

EXTENSION OF NATURAL GAS PIPELINE TO MARITIME  
PROVINCES

**Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Dartmouth-Halifax East):** Madam Speaker, I wonder if I might go back to the Prime Minister with regard to the pipeline question and ask him to turn his attention to Q & M and the dilemma which faces the maritime provinces in particular.

In Halifax, on January 25, the Prime Minister was quite explicit and clear in putting forward his party's position with respect to the sense of urgency that they attach to the pipeline east to Quebec and on into the maritime provinces. Recently I have been somewhat concerned, and I think we all are, knowing that unless a decision is made very quickly the chance of ever getting a pipeline into the maritimes is virtually zilch, zero, nothing.

Will the Prime Minister indicate whether he will use his good offices to cause, under the appropriate sections of the legislation, the reconvening of the National Energy Board on this particular application, so that a decision might be arrived at no later than next spring or summer as to whether, in fact, it will be possible?

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Madam Speaker, I can assure the hon. member that the government still shares that sense of urgency. My understanding is that some difficulties were put forward by provincial governments of an environmental or financial nature. I will inquire into them.

It seems to me that the hon. member is making a very reasonable request when he suggests that kind of a deadline. It is certainly within the same understanding as my sense of