

will know that electrical costs in Prince Edward Island are the highest in the country. In fact its electrical costs are twice those of even the neighbouring Provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

Last week the Minister of Energy stated that he opposed any federal subsidy to Prince Edward Island to deal with the problem because he was opposed to energy subsidies in principle. Could the Minister of Finance tell the House whether the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources was speaking for the Government of Canada, or whether he was merely speaking as a Liberal leadership candidate? What is the Government's policy on this important issue?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the policy of the Government in that regard has been made very clear and is well known. One of the reasons why the cost of energy, and particularly electrical energy, is so high in Prince Edward Island is because of the decision made by a Conservative provincial Government of that province to refuse the electricity that was offered by New Brunswick from its Lepreau nuclear plant because it was afraid of getting nuclear electricity out of its light bulbs.

At that time the then Premier of Prince Edward Island campaigned on the basis that he would never accept nuclear generated electricity from New Brunswick. The net result is that the province ended up buying more expensive fuel generated electricity from New Brunswick. That is one of the reasons why the price of electricity in Prince Edward Island today is higher than it should be. It was the decision of the Conservative provincial Government of that province that led to that situation.

If the Hon. Member would like to know what we are doing for Prince Edward Island, I would remind him that the federal Government, through joint agreements under regional expansion programs, is providing subsidies or help to the Province of Prince Edward Island to the tune of \$1,200 per capita. That amount is several times higher by far than the amount provided to any other province. We have been doing this consistently over the years. I would invite my hon. friend to look at the portion of the provincial Budget that comes from the federal Government. He will then realize how much support we are giving to the people of Prince Edward Island.

IMPACT OF NATIONAL ENERGY PROGRAM

Mr. Tom McMillan (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is also directed to the irate Minister of Finance. If the federal Government is opposed in principle to any direct energy subsidies to Prince Edward Island except those subsidies relating to the nuclear industry, why is the National Energy Program replete with energy subsidies for other purposes unrelated to nuclear energy, as far as Prince Edward Island is concerned, and as far as any other province is concerned.

For example, the National Energy Program is keeping natural gas prices at 65 per cent of the price of oil, and is

subsidizing the extension of natural gas pipelines. Is the Government now proposing to dismantle the National Energy Program in respect to the subsidies I have just mentioned, or does the federal Government have one standard for the rest of Canada and a completely different standard for Prince Edward Island?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am not irate. I think the Hon. Member is getting funnier and funnier, and more and more irresponsible.

I must remind the Hon. Member that, under the National Energy Program, there are special programs for Prince Edward Island dealing with conservation of energy. For the people of that province, we made special arrangements for programs in that province, as well as in one or two other maritime provinces, that were not made available anywhere else in Canada. The Hon. Member should know that. If he does not know that, I invite him to look up the facts. He will find that in the area of energy we have taken special steps in his particular province because we knew that it would not have access to natural gas as easily as some other provinces would. We have taken steps in that regard so that we might take special care of Prince Edward Island.

I might also remind the Hon. Member again that, if he looked at the federal contribution under the regional economic expansion programs, he would see that no other province in the country has received as much per capita as the Province of Prince Edward Island. I am not talking about a difference of \$2 or \$3, or even a difference of \$20 or \$30. I am talking about a difference of hundreds of dollars per capita. We are paying more to P.E.I. than to any other province. My friend should get the facts straight.

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● (1140)

[Translation]

SOCIAL WELFARE

YOUNG PEOPLE'S OCCUPATION OF MONTREAL SOCIAL WELFARE OFFICE

Mr. Ian Waddell (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my question to the Prime Minister, since the Minister of National Health and Welfare is not in the House.

In Canada, the unemployment rate among young people is twice as high as for the population in general. At this very moment, a group of young people is occupying the Welfare Office in Montreal. I see the Minister is in the House. As I was saying—

[English]

The Minister may need the translation.

An Hon. Member: It's pretty good Spanish.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!