

Oral Questions

the compensation fund to offset the cost of imported oil to the Atlantic provinces, and could he tell the House why he no longer feels obliged to keep this promise?

Mr. Lalonde: On the first point, Madam Speaker, the government has indeed made a commitment that the cost of our proposals on oil pricing will be lower than it would have been under the Conservative budget. That is a commitment we intend to honour in all respects. As a matter of fact, already this year consumers have been saved about \$2.8 billion in additional taxes which the previous government would have had them pay.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Short-term pain for long-term gain.

Mr. Blenkarn: Borrow the money instead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lalonde: I note, Madam Speaker, that truth is painful to hear for the Progressive Conservatives. What can we do?

As for the second part of the hon. member's question, I hope that, in view of his experience in the field of energy, he will avoid spreading the false interpretation inherent in his question.

[*English*]

The question is not that the oil compensation fund would be reduced at the expense of the maritime provinces. As my hon. colleague knows, we have had one price in Canada since 1974 for all of Canada and we have given every guarantee—and we maintain that guarantee—that there will remain in this country a one-price system and that the Atlantic provinces are not going to be in any worse situation than any other part of Canada. That is government policy, that has been government policy since 1974, and it is the one we intend to maintain. So the Atlantic provinces are not going to suffer from the position adopted by this government. They will be in exactly the same position as the rest of the country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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INDUSTRY**PROPOSAL FOR INSTALLATION OF SYNCROLIFT IN ST. JOHN'S DOCKYARD**

Hon. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. In view of his efforts with reference to Chrysler in the Windsor area, is he now in a position to go forward with the proposal in connection with the dockyard in St. John's for the installation of a syncrolift, which will cost \$21 million and for which there are funds in the estimates this year to go forward, creating 130 new permanent jobs and maintaining the present 330 jobs at that dockyard? When will the minister make a decision on that?

Hon. Herb Gray (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Madam Speaker, we are pursuing this actively. My recollection is that the project as originally proposed was

found to be in a form in which the cost seemed to be above the amounts originally allocated, so it is being actively reviewed to see if we can make a decision which will be satisfactory to the area and the demands on the public purse.

Mr. Crosbie: Madam Speaker, the Minister of National Revenue has intimated in Newfoundland that the government might have to scrap the \$2.5 million in the estimates for this project for this year, so it can be spent on expanding airport facilities in his district or for some other project like that which might have higher priority.

Could the minister assure me that funds dedicated to economic development projects, no matter in whose district they are—opposition or government—if the scheme is sensible, feasible and economic, as the minister's officials assure me this one is, will be used for that purpose and not devoted to pump-priming or patronage purposes in other districts just because they happen to be government districts? Would he assure me that he will see that they are devoted to the purpose for which they are in the estimates?

Mr. Gray: Madam Speaker, I would like to confirm that this government is committed to the balanced development of every part of Canada, including the province of Newfoundland.

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POST OFFICE**DEPLORABLE MAIL CONDITIONS IN CALGARY—STEPS TO IMPROVE**

Mr. Bill Wright (Calgary North): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Postmaster General and it is with regard to the deplorable mail conditions in Calgary North. There are approximately 4,000 homes in Calgary North without any type of mail delivery at all. The people there have to drive up to ten miles to get their mail from a letter depot. This amounts to 50,000 barrels of crude oil a year, or \$2 million based on the price at which we are buying oil from Mexico.

Can the minister tell this House why he condones this type of waste, and why he will not tell the Post Office immediately to commence mail delivery in these areas in Calgary North, especially since it would only cost \$200,000 a year—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Postmaster General): Madam Speaker, I want to assure the hon. member that this question is under active discussion between officials of my department and the letter carrier unions. Indeed, there is the suggestion of the establishment of a certain number of extra positions to carry out delivery services. Within the actual budget and the person allocations which we have, we are trying to find ways to improve letter delivery services in Calgary.