

Oral Questions

down on its commitment made in the 1980 election campaign to expand the power of FIRA over foreign corporations operating in this country?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I must say that I am increasingly surprised at the line of questioning being followed by the leader of the New Democratic Party. He is advocating job creation and greater investment in the country and, at the same time, he is undoubtedly raising questions which would have the very serious effect of adversely influencing much needed investment in this country. I cannot think of a worse contribution to make in present circumstances than to advocate additional interventionist measures in the economy which would have the effect of creating even greater discouragement and disincentive in the country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: The minister cannot have it both ways. In his first answer he cannot say to the House that the government is interested in dealing with foreign-owned corporations and say in the second answer that the government is not interested at all. That is the kind of hypocrisy we see too often in the Liberal government.

ACTIONS OF FOREIGN OWNED CORPORATIONS

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, will the minister deny an assertion made in the government's own documents that we are losing thousands of jobs in Canada because foreign-owned corporations here source more out of our country than do independently Canadian-owned firms? If he does not deny that, why does the government not move ahead and exercise authority over these firms to ensure that they produce more jobs in this country?

● (1430)

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, what I said to the hon. member in reply to the second question was that the government does not plan any additional measures at the present time. In the National Energy Program we have laid out a very ambitious series of steps in order to increase Canadian participation and ownership in that important strategic sector of the Canadian economy. That is our policy, and we continue to support it. However, it was also stated in the document tabled at budget time, entitled "Economic Development for Canada in the 1980s", that it is not the present intention to extend that policy to additional sectors of the Canadian economy.

Mr. McDermid: Thank God for small mercies.

Mr. MacEachen: That is not having it both ways; rather, it is moving in a timely way in order to achieve the major objective of the government at the present time, namely, concerning the field of oil and gas in the country.

[Translation]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRESENCE IN GALLERY OF FEDERAL MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR OF AUSTRIA

Madam Speaker: I have the honour of drawing the attention of the House to the presence in our gallery of Mr. Erwin Lanc, the Austrian federal Minister of the Interior.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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[English]

METRIC CONVERSION

BUSINESSMEN'S REFUSAL TO ADOPT SYSTEM

Mr. Bill Domm (Peterborough): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, the minister responsible for the Metric Commission, and several of his colleagues, are on record as saying that the government does not intend to use heavy-handed tactics of fines, seizure of equipment and even imprisonment to force its mandatory metric conversion orders in several sectors of the Canadian economy.

I have been advised that very shortly names and signatures will arrive in this House, attached to a petition from over 100 businessmen which states:

We refuse to convert our business operations to metric measurement as long as the compulsory features of the (Weights and Measures) Act are in force.

What does the minister responsible intend to do then? Does he intend to add refusal to go metric to the dozens of government-caused reasons for Canadians going out of business in droves, or does he intend to put Canadians in jail for using Canadian measurement?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): No, Madam Speaker. I think the hon. member should know that the reason that aspect of the program has become compulsory is because of the request of the industry itself. It is the industry which has recommended that it be done in this manner.

Mr. Siddon: Talk to the little guy.

Mr. Ouellet: We have said before that we do not intend to send people to jail. We are very confident that, in fact, a large majority of the population will recognize that this convention is in the best interests of Canada, in terms of our economic situation with regard to sales not only in Canada but also abroad. I have every reason to believe and hope that citizens will follow the law and will not disobey it.

JUSTIFICATION FOR CONVERSION PROGRAM

Mr. Bill Domm (Peterborough): Madam Speaker, if the minister had done his homework he would know that the sector dealing with grocery stores asked the minister not to implement metric at this time since the United States decided not to