

ENERGY

SUGGESTED APPEARANCE OF PREMIER OF NOVA SCOTIA TO COMMENT ON HIGH COST OF ENERGY

Mr. Robert Muir (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. In view of the conflict of opinions which appear to exist between the federal government and the government of Nova Scotia, namely, the opposing views held by the premier of Nova Scotia, who is also chairman of the Nova Scotia Power Commission, regarding energy and the exorbitantly high cost of electric power in Nova Scotia, would the minister invite the premier and his officials who have expertise in the subject to appear before the appropriate House committee as soon as possible, not only to give their views on the subject, but also to try to reach a solution which would ease the crushing burden of the cost of energy on the people of Nova Scotia?

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the premier of Nova Scotia is perfectly able to make that suggestion himself if he wishes to see this matter go forward to the appropriate committee. I do not think it is for me to invite another person to appear before a committee of which I am not a member.

Some hon. Members: Oh, come on.

Mr. Muir: I thank the minister for his reply, but it indicates his lack of interest in trying to help the taxpayers of Nova Scotia. I realize the finance ministers' meeting is going on at the moment, and from reports emanating from that meeting not much progress is being made. However, I am sure the minister will agree that the minister of finance of Nova Scotia is not an expert in energy and does not profess to be an expert. The premier of Nova Scotia seems to indicate he is an expert on this subject, according to the comments he has made about the minister to whom I am addressing this question.

To clarify the situation, does the minister not agree that it would be in the interests of all concerned, particularly the people of Nova Scotia who have a crushing burden to bear with regard to energy, to excel himself on this occasion and to be kindly by inviting the premier of Nova Scotia to come to Ottawa and discuss the matter?

● (1140)

Mr. Gillespie: Mr. Speaker, I think I have already answered that question. The hon. member seems to have overlooked the fact that the federal government is already providing a great deal of assistance to the hard pressed users of energy in Nova Scotia and other parts of Canada—indeed, Canada as a whole—through the compensation program. I can understand the hon. member if he is saying he wants more assistance. I ask him to suggest to me what kind of additional assistance we should be considering at a time of government restraint.

Oral Questions

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

MONITORING OF COMPANIES TO ENSURE FULFILMENT OF COMMITMENTS AT TIME OF TAKEOVER—POSSIBILITY OF PENALTIES

Mr. James Gillies (Don Valley): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. It is in relation to his responsibilities for FIRA. Is the government monitoring the degree to which companies that are given approval for a takeover are fulfilling all the obligations they agree to at the time that takeover is permitted?

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Yes, Mr. Speaker. There is a monitoring process. Since the agency has only been in existence for 18 months or so, it is only now becoming urgent and important to do this monitoring because, normally speaking, the commitments involve an 18 months time span in most cases. We are working it out. There are some difficulties. I am holding discussions with the officials of FIRA to see how the procedure can be improved.

Mr. Gillies: Does the government propose to bring in legislation which will have specific penalties for companies that do not live up to agreements that are given under their commitments at the time the takeover takes place?

Mr. Jamieson: Mr. Speaker, nothing as specific as that is contemplated by me at the present time. However, I would be glad to discuss with the hon. member or anybody else interested just how such an arrangement might be made to work. In other words, one of the concerns is that we do monitor and ensure that the commitments are carried out, but just how we would phrase a penalty clause is something we are examining. As I said, I would welcome proposals as to how that might be done.

* * *

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

RECONCILIATION OF POSITION AT LAW OF SEA CONFERENCE WITH PERMISSION TO DRILL FOR OIL IN BEAUFORT SEA

Miss Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Given the strenuous arguments being put forward by Canada to the Law of the Sea Conference for international recognition of the principles in the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act because of the need to protect the delicate ecological balance of our Arctic seabed, can the minister explain how the government can reconcile this stance which it is taking externally with its current consideration of a permit for oil exploration in the Beaufort Sea, a project which could present extremely hazardous environmental conditions and which could jeopardize Canada's position at the Law of the Sea Conference?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I can assure my hon. friend that the problems posed by our general position at the Law of the Sea Conference and the pending decision upon exploration in the Beaufort Sea obviously is part of the consideration that is going on at present, and part of the consideration that is involved in our discussions with the