Mr. Lalonde: —by 60,000 barrels per day. This is regrettable, but it has taken place.

Mr. Clark: It is not true.

Mr. Lalonde: As far as the energy program is concerned, as I said we have made some adjustments to ensure that the industry will be in a position to make profits and that Canadian firms, in particular, will be able to grow much faster than in the past. We are convinced that this can be achieved.

Also I have indicated that we were willing to undertake further discussions with the producing provinces in order to arrive at a satisfactory arrangement.

Mr. Nielsen: What about rationing?

Mr. Lalonde: I hope these negotiations and discussions will take place.

Mr. Gurbin: Madam Speaker, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources will know that Alberta did not turn down the tap until at least the end of February of this year. The figures I gave him were for January and February of this year.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gurbin: The real point that Canadians do not understand is that Alberta is running out of cheap conventional oil. It just simply is not there, and the National Energy Program is doing nothing to provide for its replacement.

ROLE OF POST OFFICE IN DISTRIBUTING RATIONING COUPONS

Mr. G. M. Gurbin (Bruce-Grey): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Postmaster General. He will know that there is an ongoing survey in the Post Office which is looking at the ability of the post office network to provide for the distribution of gas rationing coupons. Will the minister table this survey, explain it to us now, and tell us how quickly he feels the Post Office will be able to implement gas rationing coupon distribution?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I should like to point out to the hon. member that we have included a complete program of self-sufficiency for this decade in the National Energy Program, and that self-sufficiency will be assured mainly by the production of the tar sands, heavy oils, and also offshore discoveries in the Arctic. The National Energy Program has all the necessary instruments to achieve that purpose.

As far as the question raised by the hon. member is concerned, I understand that it was raised in the House a couple of days ago. There is no foundation whatever to the notion that there will be a planning of a rationing scheme to be put into effect in this country in current circumstances. What is taking place is a review of the program under the Energy Supplies Allocation Board, which has been in operation for several years, to take care of emergencies, together with other member countries of the International Energy Agency.

What is taking place at the present time is a review of the system involving the Post Office to ensure that if an emergency hits the western world in particular, we as industrialized countries would be ready to face such an emergency. It is just an updating of the program in place under the Energy Supplies Allocation Board.

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● (1450)

THE ECONOMY

FUTURE OF GEORGIA PACIFIC MILL IN NEW BRUNSWICK

Hon. J. Robert Howie (York-Sunbury): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. I apologize for not being able to give him notice. In view of the economic chaos in the building trades created by the government's refusal or inability to combat high mortgage interest rates, will the government take any initiatives in the closing of mills making building products, such as the Georgia Pacific Mill in New Brunswick which is about to close and create very widespread unemployment in the area? This is the result of national government policies which, taken in the context of national interest, impact adversely on the fragile economies of the Atlantic provinces.

I would like to ask the minister if he would discuss the closing of this mill and the related building products trade problem with economic ministers such as the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion and, in this case, the minister from New Brunswick, and would he also address the question of the adverse impact some of our national policies such as tight money and high interest rates have on the fragile economies and businesses in the Atlantic provinces?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, as the hon. member knows, the interest rates which prevail in the country today are basically the result of the high inflation which besets not only Canada but other countries in the world as well. The best way to reduce interest rates over time is to attempt to reduce over-all inflation.

I will, as the hon. member suggests, be pleased to look at this particular problem which concerns him, and discuss it with my colleagues he has mentioned.

Mr. Howie: I thank the minister very much for his answer.