

Oral Questions

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and President of Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, the question has been couched in such an obscure way that I feel like answering "yes and no".

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FINANCE**RELOCATION OF CIVIL SERVANTS—EFFECT ON ECONOMY OF OTTAWA AREA**

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Finance. It arises out of the report of Woods-Gordon on the economic crisis facing Ottawa as a result of relocation, the effect of which will be an estimated burden of \$250 million on Ottawa and surrounding municipalities over the next ten years. In view of the fact that property owners are facing a double inconvenience, the inconvenience of travelling a greater distance to work as well as an inconvenience caused by an increase in their tax load as a result of the shrinkage of the tax base—that is the essence of the report—when does the government intend to bring in its grants in lieu of tax legislation, so that property owners, tenants and others in Ottawa and surrounding municipalities can expect some kind of relief? This was caused basically by the government's decision to relocate.

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, in my meeting with the mayor and other officials, I said I would look into some aspects of the legislation referred to by the hon. member. I said I was prepared to consider some changes, and we are in the process of looking into that matter at this time. However, I would like to point out to the hon. member that he is confusing two policies. There is a relocation to Hull, but there is also a policy of moving some of the bureaucracy out of the national capital region and into other areas of the nation. I would like to tell the hon. member that that was one of the main topics of the program of his leader in his campaign for the leadership of the Tories.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I am not talking about the politics of the situation. The minister has proved that with respect to decentralization, he is a great political animal but a very poor equitable animal. When is the minister going to match with deeds his promise to the ratepayers of this area? When does the government intend to introduce this bill? Has the bill been drafted and, if so, when will it appear on the order paper? There has been a lot of wind, but not very much substance, to the minister's promises. He is hardly believable any more.

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, in talking about wind, I have an example to follow from this hon. gentleman.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chrétien: We met with the municipalities as recently as two or three weeks ago. We are working on this problem at the

[Mr. Baldwin.]

moment, and we will be pleased to table the bill as soon as it is ready.

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[*English*]

ENERGY**CAPE BRETON—DATE OF ANNOUNCEMENT ON OPENING OF NEW COAL MINE**

Mr. Robert Muir (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister, who is from Cape Breton. Since he is from Cape Breton, and since he is the Deputy Prime Minister, I am sure he will have the answer to my question. Can the hon. gentleman advise this House if tomorrow the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and Premier Regan are going to announce the opening of a new coal mine in Cape Breton or, if not tomorrow, how soon will it be announced?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and President of Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the interest of the Cape Breton Development Corporation in opening a new mine. As I understand it, drilling activities have been very promising and have established the reserves which would make possible the consideration of a new mine. But I also understand that at the present time there must be an engineering design study in order to estimate the cost of such a new mine, and I think it is early, despite the promising possibilities, to confirm that construction will begin as soon as the hon. member and I might wish.

Mr. Muir: Mr. Speaker, may I ask my hon. friend if, as the date for a provincial election in Nova Scotia draws closer and a date for a federal election draws closer, there will be a multiplicity of these announcements, which have been advocated by the opposition over a period of years?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Victoria-Haliburton.

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TRADE**DISCREPANCIES IN RETAIL PRICE OF GASOLINE—REQUEST FOR INVESTIGATION**

Mr. W. C. Scott (Victoria-Haliburton): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. It concerns discrepancies in the retail price of gasoline charged by various oil companies. As there is often a variation of up to 16 cents per gallon for the same grade of gas in a given area, and as this places the major chains in an advantageous position, will the minister undertake an investigation into possible collusion between major oil companies and further monopolization of this industry?

Hon. Jack H. Horner (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, that aspect of marketing gas has