

Oral Questions

that United States consumers now pay in the order of 15 cents a litre, or 60 to 70 cents a gallon Canadian currency, Canadian gallons, less for gasoline and heating oil than Canadians. Americans are not protected from the world price. They pay world price while we in Canada are supposedly protected from high world prices by this made-in-Canada creation of the Minister's predecessor. Obviously, either the pricing regime put in place by the Minister's predecessor is not working properly, or the Government is perpetrating a fraud on Canadians, because we are paying 60 to 70 cents a gallon more for gasoline in Canada today than are Americans who are paying the world price.

In view of this reality that the scheme is not working, or fraud is being perpetrated, does the Minister feel an obligation to re-examine that whole structure, and either admit that the Government was mistaken in what it promised and committed itself to, or else make changes to keep the promises that were made in the last election and since then?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I think the Hon. Member's statement was not quite accurate, because he forgot to mention that prices in Canada are sometimes higher because of provincial taxes which vary enormously from province to province, and considerably increase the national average. In some provinces there is no sales tax, while in other provinces, the tax on gas may be extremely high, thus raising the national average. As for the base price paid to Canadian producers, we pay the international price for imported oil, about 75 per cent of the international price for old oil and the international price for new oil. The problem is therefore not our basic policy but the sales tax which varies across Canada.

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[English]

THE ADMINISTRATION

REPORTED STATEMENTS BY MINISTER OF ENERGY, MINES AND RESOURCES

Hon. George Hees (Northumberland): Madam Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the Prime Minister. As the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources advised a group of American Congressmen who were at a dinner here in this building on Friday, and was quoted as saying:

I don't know how long we'll be here, we're in terrible shape.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister if he has any plans for improving the terrible shape which the Hon. Minister so correctly described the Government as being in. If so, when will those plans be made known to the Canadian people?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, knowing the hon. Member's political acumen I thought I would not have to explain to him, but the Minister of

Energy was really trying to ensure that the present Tory Leader would be confirmed at this week's convention.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

APPRAISAL OF POSSIBLE LEADERSHIP RACE

Hon. George Hees (Northumberland): Madam Speaker, as the Right Hon. Prime Minister knows, also in that speech, a very eloquent speech by the way, the Minister is directly quoted as saying:

If I run hard, Trudeau will say: 'Chrétien, out of the cabinet'.

Does the Prime Minister not think this is being hard on his colleague, a very good and old friend, in view of the fact that many of his colleagues are running very hard at the present time, both here in Ottawa and in Toronto?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, the only conclusion that the Hon. Member should deduct from the alleged quote of the Minister of Energy is that he too has political acumen.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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● (1440)

PENITENTIARIES

CANCELLATION OF UNIVERSITY COURSES

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Solicitor General. Last week it was announced that the Minister intends to cancel post-secondary university education courses in the federal prison system. These important programs which are offered at four B.C. institutions by the University of Victoria, as well as at three other Canadian prisons in Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec, have been by far the most successful rehabilitative programs within the federal prison system.

Will the Minister explain the incredible decision to axe this successful program, which is supported across the board by citizens, advisory boards, guards, prisoners, wardens and after-care agencies, and which has been described by his own Director of Academic Education as the finest program of its type in North America?

Hon. Bob Kaplan (Solicitor General of Canada): Madam Speaker, there were 232 inmates among the 10,000 in our system who were benefiting from those programs. I do not agree they have been proven to be particularly rehabilitative because post-secondary offenders tend to recidivate much less than the general population in any event. But they were good programs and I was very proud of them. I regretted very much having to do that. They were the best in North America. But we also have the most expensive correctional service system in North America and I am responsible for restraining expenditures within the Correctional Services of Canada, as elsewhere.