

Oral Questions

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Clark: This government has demonstrated a greater independence from the rate of increase in the United States than was the case prior to the last election. We do believe, and I repeat it to the Leader of the New Democratic Party, that it would be useful for all aspects of this question to be reviewed by a standing committee of the House of Commons. The Leader of the New Democratic Party knows that the striking committee will be meeting tomorrow. We expect it will be possible for that committee to be struck before the end of this week. We would certainly be prepared to have that reference go as quickly as possible to that committee.

● (1425)

Mr. Broadbent: A final supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. When the present Prime Minister was leader of the opposition, he used to castigate the Liberals for passing off serious problems to committees. I suggest he should practice now what he was preaching then.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: Considering that his loquacious colleague from Newfoundland, the Minister of Finance, said—and he is quoted in today's papers—that “interest rate increases no longer seem to have the effect”—

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. With respect, the hon. member is engaging in a preamble that I think is lengthy in terms of his third question. Will he please put a question.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, I will come right to the point. Since the Minister of Finance said this policy is now disastrous—he admitted it yesterday—will the Prime Minister now implement a policy in accord with what he was preaching before he formed the government, namely, reduce interest rates instead of boosting them?

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, as the Leader of the New Democratic Party will know, we have already this day implemented one of the major undertakings we made in the election campaign, which was to accord much greater respect to the committees of this House so that we can draw upon the advice of all members of this House and, indeed, of the public, in dealing with very complex problems.

The members of the New Democratic Party will have the same opportunity as members of other parties in this House to contribute in a practical way to solutions to the dilemma that faces Canada. We look forward to receiving in that committee and in other forums the specific proposals that members of that party may well have, as the committee will receive specific proposals and testimony by the Minister of Finance.

[Mr. Clark.]

ENERGY

POSITION OF CHAIRMAN OF TASK FORCE ON PETRO-CANADA

Mr. Gary F. McCauley (Moncton): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, with respect to Petro-Canada. Can the minister confirm that the chairman of the task force on Petro-Canada, Mr. Don McDougall, although on leave as president of Labatt's is still receiving full salary from that company, and that that company is owned by Brascan which has indicated an interest in buying Petro-Canada?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: Already?

Some hon. Members: Resign.

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I cannot confirm the facts with respect to the income received by the chairman of the task force, but I can tell the hon. member that I am not aware of any interest formally expressed with respect to the acquisition of PetroCan by the company referred to by the hon. member.

Mr. McCauley: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Can we count on an investigation and some answers to that question?

Mr. Hnatyshyn: I will be glad to look into the matter, Mr. Speaker.

OIL—GOVERNMENT POLICY ON PRICING

Mr. Arthur Phillips (Vancouver Centre): Mr. Speaker, I, too, have a question for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. I should like to ask him if it is true that, regardless of any agreements between the federal government and the provinces, the federal government favours a price increase of \$5 to \$6 a barrel in the price of oil in 1980, which would cost the average consumer perhaps \$100 more per year to drive his car and \$120 more per year to heat his house.

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I think the Prime Minister has indicated exactly the status of the negotiations. We have been on record with respect to the question of an increase that we think is necessary in the price of oil, but the matter of the precise extent—

An hon. Member: What do you think?

Mr. Hnatyshyn: I am trying to explain this to the hon. member, who has lots to learn about energy policy.

An hon. Member: Arrogant.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: I want to tell this House that we are in the process of deep consultation with the provinces, a practice that the hon. member for Outremont, in his former capacity as federal-provincial minister, will recall is very essential. We