

He also indicated the steps his government had taken to maintain quotas and ensure supply for independent distributors. Could the right hon. Prime Minister advise us, taking into account everything that has been said over the past few days, where we stand now as far as supply for independent distributors is concerned?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, it would be necessary for me to check the exact situation of the independent distributors. I do not have the relevant information with me today. I should like, however, to mention to the hon. member that in the letters I wrote him I indicated the following:

Should we be faced with a disruption of oil supply sufficient to cause a national emergency, then I can assure you that the government is prepared to use the powers available to it under the Energy Supplies Emergency Act, 1979 to conserve supplies and to provide for their equitable distribution.

FUEL OIL—REQUEST FOR STUDY OF REDUCTIONS IN SUPPLY
FOR INDEPENDENTS

Mr. Fabien Roy (Beauce): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the right hon. Prime Minister whether he was informed that independent distributors had their quotas reduced by almost half for December alone. I have an example for him. An independent distributor who had a quota of 98,000 gallons of heating oil had it reduced to 58,000 gallons in December, which means that his quota was reduced by 40,000 gallons. I should like to ask the right hon. Prime Minister whether he is prepared to inform the House today that his government will take every measure necessary to correct the situation forthwith.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Prime Minister): First, Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to review and consider the situation referred to by the hon. member. Second, last week I indicated that the government intends to announce the names of the members of the supply board later this week.

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[English]

NATIONAL REVENUE

PRINTING AND MAILING OF 1979 INCOME TAX FORMS

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the government House leader in his capacity as Minister of National Revenue. Not long before the House opened today, it was alleged to me that not only have the personal income tax forms for the 1979 tax year not yet been mailed out, but the printing of them has not yet been completed. This clashes with what the minister told the House on November 28, when he used words to the effect that they had been printed and the mailing was to be completed by early last week.

Could he tell the House, now, exactly what the state of affairs is and, in particular, if they were printed, the exact

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dates the printing was carried out, and if they were mailed, the exact dates on which they were mailed?

Hon. Walter Baker (President of the Privy Council and Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I cannot tell the hon. member the exact dates, but when I made the statement in the House during the course of the debate on Bill C-20, the forms were in fact ready. I am advised that the mailing has begun in respect of those forms. I want to assure the hon. member—and he should know, as a former minister of national revenue—that the decision had to be made when it was made, and the action taken when it was taken.

Mr. Gray: Mr. Speaker, since this is important in terms of the vote we will be taking on the closure motion later this day, I would ask the President of the Privy Council and Minister of National Revenue if he could give us the exact information before that vote is taken. Exactly when was the printing of these forms completed; exactly how many forms were mailed out, and on what date, and exactly how many forms remain to be mailed out? The minister should know that there is no absolute legal requirement within the law insisting that the procedure had to be carried out, as he said when he spoke in the House.

• (1430)

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member, as a former minister of national revenue, ought to know that the Department of National Revenue would act on behalf of the provinces with respect to property tax credit legislation, as it does with the child tax credit. These refunds would be delayed if the steps which I outlined in my speech on Bill C-20 were not taken. These steps were taken for administrative necessity, and the hon. member, being a former minister, ought not to be so silly as to deny that they are necessary.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

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[Translation]

FINANCE

POSSIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING DUTY-FREE ZONE BETWEEN
CANADA AND UNITED STATES

Mr. Bernard Loiselle (Verchères): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. Last July he gave us to understand that the formula to establish a duty-free zone between Canada and the United States deserved serious consideration. Can the minister say whether he is still in favour of such a duty-free zone between Canada and the United States, and does his position reflect the position of the government?

[English]

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I have never said whether I favour a duty-free zone between Canada and the United States or any other kind of zone. What I suggested, and what I suggest again today, is that it is time