

• (1125)

An Hon. Member: There's the baloney.

Mr. MacLaren: That is the situation. We shall have a program in place retroactively to March 1 as soon as we introduce the legislation, which I anticipate will be within the next few days.

* * *

INDUSTRY

PETROCHEMICAL INDUSTRY—PRICE OF NATURAL GAS

Mr. Scott Fennell (Ontario): Mr. Speaker, I wish to address my question to the President of the Treasury Board, as he is ultimately responsible for all costs relative to government expenditures. As he knows, the Petrochemical Task Force Report came down three months ago and work is being done on it, but at a very slow pace. There are over 200,000 jobs at stake. There is a city in southwestern Ontario that is very concerned about the situation. Does the President of the Treasury Board endorse the policy to reduce the cost of natural gas and natural gas liquids to the Gulf Gate rate?

Hon. Herb Gray (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, this Government is very interested in the well-being of the eastern petrochemical industry. This is demonstrated by such initiatives as the pipeline between Sarnia and Montreal, and a number of other initiatives. I can assure my hon. friend that we are giving very serious attention to the report. It has some very broad ramifications.

I must say that if the friends of the Conservatives, the provincial Governments of western Canada, and particularly Alberta, had not taken certain actions, some of the studies we are carrying out with respect to the task force report, in my view, would not have been necessary. I think my hon. friend ought to direct some of his questions to his own colleagues in western Canada as well as to ourselves.

With respect to a detailed response, I think he should address the question to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources who, I am sure, will be happy to respond as soon as we finish our consideration.

Mr. Fennell: It is fine to build pipelines, but if you put a product through that pipeline that is uneconomical as far as the petrochemical industry is concerned, it does not provide the benefit to create jobs.

REQUEST FOR MINISTERIAL ACTION

Mr. Scott Fennell (Ontario): Mr. Speaker, considering that \$2 billion of exports are derived from the petrochemical industry and that there are \$600,000 in rubber tire exports indirectly from this industry, will the Minister take a firm stand to reduce the cost of natural gas and natural gas liquids by at least 15 per cent, and preferably to the Gulf Gate rate?

Oral Questions

Hon. Herb Gray (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend knows that questions of this sort should be addressed to the responsible Ministers. In this case it is the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

Mr. Nielsen: Where is he?

An Hon. Member: They are never here.

Mr. Gray: I think the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion also has a role.

Mr. Crosbie: Where is the responsible Minister?

Mr. Gray: My hon. friends ask where they are. Where are all the people sitting on your side? Where is your Leader, for example?

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Down in Windsor.

Mr. Gray: In any event, I want to confirm to my hon. friend the great interest that the Government has in the well-being of the eastern petrochemical industry. In that regard we have the benefit of the very firm views of the Hon. Member for Sarnia. Many of the things my hon. friend is saying, which he has just learned of, have been put forward very effectively by the Hon. Member for Sarnia. With his interest and support I am confident that we will make the right decision in the best interest of the petrochemical industry and its workers.

* * *

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

STRAIT OF HORMUZ—BOMBING OF OIL TANKERS—REQUEST FOR REPORT

Mr. Ian Waddell (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of International Trade. I am sure he must be aware, as we all are, of the events in the Strait of Hormuz and the potential threats to the oil supply to the western world. Would he inform the House whether he has been in touch with the Canadian embassies in the area, and can he give us any further information on the damage to the ships there? Has the Government been in touch with the Government of the United States concerning the strategic reserves of the United States in particular, and of Canada?

Hon. Gerald Regan (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, of course the Hon. Member touches on a very serious threat to world peace, the escalation of the conflict between Iran and Iraq down in the Gulf with the interference with tankers in that area. It is true that attacks have occurred on ships in that region and that this could pose a threat to the shipment of oil from an area that provides in excess of one-quarter of the world's oil supply. Actually only about 3.5 per cent of Canada's oil supplies came from that area as of 1979, of which the percentage has been tending downward since that time with Canada's temporary self-sufficiency in oil. We do