

Oral Questions

Canadians who work in the field looking for new sources to go out and look for new oil, look for new gas and to bring this country toward self-sufficiency in all forms of energy to the degree that is possible.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SOURCES OF FUTURE ENERGY SUPPLIES

Mr. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask a question of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. I refer to his statement yesterday when he informed the House that 17 years from now the demand for natural gas will be greater than the supply. Could the minister inform this House today where Canadians will turn 17 years from now for home, commercial and industrial requirements across the nation?

● (1130)

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, the reference the hon. member makes with regard to that particular projection simply does not take into account further exploration and bringing further discoveries on stream. The hon. member is using that particular chart to indicate that nothing further is going to happen.

As the Prime Minister pointed out, this particular export activity now is going to generate a very great degree of involvement in terms of conventional oil supplies and the immense amount of tight gas out in western Canada. It does not take into account the offshore potential and it does not take into account frontier possibilities in this country. We have great potential in this country, and this government is committed to determining and deciding upon a course of action that will bring us to the great future that we deserve.

Mr. Caccia: Mr. Speaker, that reply sounds as though it was drafted by Imperial Oil. I would, therefore, turn to the Postmaster General and Minister of the Environment. I would ask whether he was consulted, and does he support this proposal involving the heating resource that is the least environmentally detrimental to the country?

Hon. John A. Fraser (Postmaster General and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I most certainly do support the proposal. I would remind the hon. member that this country has to make appropriate use of its resources, and when there is gas surplus to our needs it is almost negligent, and certainly not in the public interest, to allow the continuing and deteriorating balance of payments situation.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

POSSIBILITY OF IMPOSING EXCISE TAX ON PETROLEUM PRODUCTS—DISCUSSIONS WITH PREMIER OF QUEBEC

Mr. Bernard Loiselle (Verchères): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the right hon. Prime Minister who accuses

[Mr. Clark.]

the former government of lack of planning. I should like to remind him that in 1970 Canada was dependent on others for 50 per cent of its energy consumption and that by 1978 that dependence had decreased to 30 per cent as a result of the excellent policies of the Liberal government.

Mr. Speaker, would the right hon. Prime Minister tell us how he will respond to the request of the Quebec premier who indicated to the Canadian Prime Minister that he disagreed with the proposal that the federal government might levy an excise tax on oil products? How does the Prime Minister, who has spoken of great co-operation and agreements with the provinces, intend to respond to the request of Premier Lévesque?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I can tell the House that a recent list certainly indicates the lack of efficiency of the energy policies of the former government with regard to self-sufficiency. However, if I may answer the question directly, I did get a message from the Quebec premier indicating the position of his government against the levying of an excise tax by the federal government. It was a confirmation of the position adopted by Minister Bérubé during the first ministers' conference. As the hon. member and the House will understand, there is clear federal jurisdiction in the matter of levying an excise tax on oil. That jurisdiction was exercised by the former government when it applied an excise tax. It is the intention of the federal government to follow our plans with regard to excise tax in a field over which there is clear federal jurisdiction.

INQUIRY AS TO INVESTMENT NEEDED TO REACH ENERGY SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Mr. Bernard Loiselle (Verchères): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask a supplementary question. If the Prime Minister wishes his consultation policy to succeed, could he not give some evidence of it to the Quebec premier who really needs those funds? He cites figures. He talks about the need for investment from Canadians. We members of the opposition would also be interested to know the investments required to reach self-sufficiency. Therefore I ask whether he could give us those figures, and try to convince Premier Lévesque.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the development of our proposal to establish a Canadian energy bank, we are identifying the energy projects where it will be essential for us to have more money—funds that are not available in the private sector—to promote energy projects. I hope that as soon as we can identify all the elements of our over-all position on energy, particularly on the creation of a Canadian energy bank, it will then be possible for us to give figures indicating the needs in the area of energy projects.