

Octane Enhancers

ethanol and 92 per cent gasoline lies within the satisfactory operating region for Reid vapour pressure or RVP. RVP is simply the vapour pressure of a fuel at 37.8 degree Celsius. It is used to measure the fuel volatility and, of course, fuel volatility must be controlled between suitable limits to provide proper operation in an internal combustion engine.

At the lower end, some volatility must be present to allow starting in cold temperatures and, at the upper end, too much volatility can cause vapour lock. I mentioned the problem with methanol when exposed to very high temperatures.

The Canadian General Standards Board allows for three levels of RVP, a summer grade, a winter grade and an intermediate grade. Through studies on this particular gasoline blend, it was found that this blend would have the vapour pressure and volatility characteristics suitable for the area of western Ontario. The study suggested that motorists using this fuel would not experience vapour lock problems.

What about the other areas of our country, Mr. Speaker? Winters can get very cold in some parts of this country. Another problem with this blend of gasoline is drivability during warm up. I know that anyone who has had the distinct pleasure of sitting in a cold car waiting for it to warm up would find that an annoying problem.

These may be simple questions which have no bearing on the ultimate need to change to a blend such as this, but once again these are questions which are worth studying and worth answering because they are questions, Mr. Speaker, which are going to be asked of us who will be debating this very important issue.

The fact that this blend consumes less energy per mile is very significant. It does help to reduce our need for imported light crude oil products, and after the OPEC shocks to the western world, that is a very welcome option. Canada does have huge reserves of feed stocks from which methanol can be produced and it would create an expanding market for Canadian corn producers. With the situation in the agricultural industry at the present time, I think it is very important to be able to provide a blend which would be suitable to the motorist, to the environment and would be helpful to the Canadian public, and at the same time, it would be of benefit to the agricultural industry, which is something that would be very attractive indeed.

We must also look, Mr. Speaker, at what this type of blend will do for the consumer. Bob Chislett of Sunoco, who has joined with Alberta Gas Chemical Ltd. in test-marketing the blended fuel says that the consumer benefit. I believe that is very significant. Mr. Chislett says that the higher octane rating can help stop engine knock and in winter can reduce gasoline freeze-up. It also burns more cleanly, which of course reduces the emissions going into our atmosphere.

However, the consumer does not get any break with lower prices. The reason for this is not because of the blend so much as it depends upon the price at which it is offered to the Canadian public. If recent history repeats itself, there is a very great reluctance to reduce fuel oil prices. Of course, there is

also the high cost of the co-solvent which must be present in this blend and which at present comes from the United States.

The Ontario Government is waiving the tax on the methanol portion of the fuel, but the consumer will not feel it because of the increased cost in producing the blend. So there are many advantages to this blend of gasoline, advantages which we must consider, especially in view of the fact that lead additives are being phased down in our gasoline products from .77 grams per litre to .29 grams per litre by 1988. Therefore, we have no choice. We must find other octane enhancers, but in looking at those alternate fuels, we must also look at the history of the product. In 1976, the Canadian Society of Chemical Engineers and the Canadian Society of Mechanical Engineers concluded at a symposium that methanol may have better use as a replacement for liquefied petroleum gas in gas turbines. There would be fewer problems and application could be in areas such as electrical generation in rural communities for grain drying. We must look at their reservations, even though it was back in 1976. They were still reservations held by a very important and learned body.

We must be sure before we approve anything that our children will not regret our choice in future years. I must stress here, Mr. Speaker, that we must have an open mind in looking at this question, not because we do not see the benefits of what is before us today but because of the importance of the decision and because of the great utility of the product on which we would be passing judgment and which we would be analysing. If the effects were detrimental in any small fashion whatsoever, it could have serious consequences in the years ahead.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, I feel that the Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Public Works should have the opportunity to study the question more carefully, to invite members of the industry who are involved in the production of this blend and to hear from members of the auto industry who have some reservations about the blend, and of course, to hear experts on the environment.

We must realize that this blend of gasoline is widely used in other parts of the world, in West Germany, Brazil and in the United States. It is imperative that we look at what it means for Canada, and especially for the future health of Canadians.

I request, Mr. Speaker, as does the Hon. Member who presented this motion, that the question be referred to the Standing Committee in order that we can fully understand the implications and consequences of our decisions. We will then be in a better position to pass judgment and make a more informed decision about the use and possibilities of this very important fuel for our country.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The Hon. Member for Regina East (Mr. de Jong) from a standing position.

● (1730)

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina East): Mr. Speaker, the doctors have put a cast on me and I am able to hop around and stand and face you and bow, Sir.