

Oral Questions

● (1412)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I had intended to ask questions of the Prime Minister, the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Supply and Services on a very important issue touching upon the liberty of the subject. In the appalling absence of those ministers, and if it were not too late—probably it is—I would like to move a motion under Standing Order 43 to the effect that the Sergeant-at-Arms be instructed to go out and have those members attend the service of the House.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baldwin: I will postpone asking these questions until these ministers return.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I will postpone my questions until these ministers return.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, I, too, will have to hold my questions until the Prime Minister gets here.

* * *

[Translation]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

REQUESTED AMENDMENT TO LEGISLATION TO PROVIDE JUSTICE TO FARM WORKERS

Mr. C. A. Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. It deals with section 57 of the unemployment insurance regulations, namely, that which stipulates that whoever works for a farmer is not entitled to unemployment insurance stamps unless he has worked during 25 work days. This is discrimination because in industry the employer must pay those stamps for the first full week of employment. I therefore ask the minister whether he intends to change that rule to do justice to farm workers.

Hon. Bud Cullen (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his representations. From time to time, that rule has posed problems and we will have to examine it. I believe my advisory council will look into it in the near future.

Mr. Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, I should like to point out to the minister, before he goes ahead with that study, that there are cases of real hardship such as the one that recently occurred in my riding. After one year, a person was declared non-insurable and had to reimburse \$2,400; civil servants had said the person could be insured. I ask the

[Mr. Speaker.]

minister whether it might be possible to do something in such cases?

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I believe that, with the present regulations, it is impossible.

* * *

[English]

ENERGY

PROPOSED TAKEOVER OF HUSKY OIL BY PETRO-CANADA

Mr. Harvie Andre (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and concerns the Petro-Canada takeover bid of Husky Oil at a price rumoured to be 50 per cent higher than the market considers Husky shares to be worth. Given that when Petro-Canada was established, we were told its purpose was to explore, either alone or jointly with other Canadian companies, for new oil and gas reserves, can the minister tell the House why Petro-Canada is using taxpayers' money to buy out an existing oil company, rather than pursuing its original mandate of aggressively exploring for new oil and gas reserves?

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I believe, if the hon. member were to reflect on the objects of the Crown corporation and review the various statements of government ministers of the day in respect of the purpose of the Crown corporation, Petro-Canada, he would realize that the activities, including acquisition by Petro-Canada, are very much in the national interest and very much in conformity with the mandate as laid down by the House of Commons.

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, given that Petro-Canada has yet to discover any new oil and gas reserves, and in view of the fact that at least one other consortium of Canadian-owned and controlled companies, of which I am aware, as I am sure is the minister, was on the verge of making a takeover bid for Husky when upstaged by Petro-Canada, would the minister not agree that in terms of Canada's over-all interests it would be better to allow these private Canadian companies to take over Husky Oil and direct Petro-Canada to fulfil its original mandate, namely, going out and trying to find the new oil and gas reserves which Canada is supposed to need in the future?

● (1417)

Mr. Gillespie: Mr. Speaker, I believe the hon. member has misread the situation and is trying to mislead public opinion with respect to the situation. The board of directors of Petro-Canada or, more particularly, the president, has issued a statement today indicating that they have communicated their interest in acquiring all of the common shares of Husky Oil. To my knowledge, no other group of Canadian companies has made a similar declaration.

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, I hope the minister did not say that I deliberately misled the House.