

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

ENERGY

GASOLINE PRICE INCREASE IN MONTREAL—POSSIBILITY OF ROLL-BACK—INVESTIGATION BY COMBINES BRANCH

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the right hon. Prime Minister dealing with the combines investigation going on in Montreal as a result of the 2½ cents per gallon increase in the price of gasoline. Is the Prime Minister now in a position to advise the House whether the government is requesting a roll-back in the 2½ cents per gallon increase in the price of gasoline by the 500 Montreal service stations and, if so, will a statement be made in this regard in the very near future?

● (1410)

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I am advised that as a result of an apparently collective decision by the retailers in the Montreal area there has been an increase, or proposed increase, at the retail level. As I indicated to the House last week, we do not have jurisdiction to control prices at the retail level, but jurisdiction does exist, of course, against any collusive arrangements resulting in any unreasonable or unjustified increases in price. It is on the basis of the Combines Investigation Act that action has been taken. The Combines Investigation Act does not include the power to roll prices back without due judicial proceedings.

ALLEGED ORDER TO GULF STATIONS IN WINNIPEG TO INCREASE GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, let me go to another area, seeing that the government is prepared to allow things to stay as they are. Can the minister advise me whether he is aware of the fact that in Winnipeg non-independent Gulf stations were ordered to increase gasoline prices by as much as four cents per gallon? Has the minister contacted Gulf in this regard and has he requested Gulf to roll back that increase?

Hon. Donald Macdonald (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I was in touch with Gulf this morning and was advised that the Canadian Press report was not a factual report.

REPRESENTATIONS BY GOVERNMENT TO OIL COMPANIES AGAINST RETAIL GASOLINE PRICE INCREASES

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, my last supplementary is this: In view of the concern that has been registered by everyone with respect to the increases by retailers, has the government made any direct representations to the major oil companies about holding the line on retail gasoline prices? If so, what has been their response?

Oral Questions

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, given the structure of the industry and the fact that in a very substantial number of cases the retail level is determined by independent operators, the companies have taken the position that while they can have some control upstream, if you like, from the retail level, they cannot control the retail level itself, as, indeed, I pointed out to the House last week.

GASOLINE PRICE INCREASES—POSSIBILITY OF WIDER POWERS FOR PRICES REVIEW BOARD

Mr. Cyril Symes (Sault Ste. Marie): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a supplementary question to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. In light of the increases in gasoline prices proposed in western and eastern Canada, is the minister considering giving wider powers to the Prices Review Board in order that gasoline may be investigated?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out, the report that the hon. member for Hamilton West referred to respecting western Canada apparently is not an accurate report. With regard to the Montreal situation, a combines inquiry is in process. As to whether the powers of the board would be increased, I would have to take that under advisement. That, of course, would not be my decision.

OIL—REQUESTED ABOLITION OF OTTAWA VALLEY LINE PENDING POSSIBLE EXTENSION OF PIPELINE TO MONTREAL

Mr. Cyril Symes (Sault Ste. Marie): Mr. Speaker, may I ask another supplementary further to the question of oil and the proposed pipeline to eastern Canada. Pending the decision on the construction of an oil pipeline to Montreal, is the government prepared to remove the Ottawa Valley line and permit the movement of western Canadian oil or offshore oil by truck and boat past the Ottawa Valley so that real competition ensues and the consumer benefits from lower prices?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resource): Mr. Speaker, I should point out to the hon. member that the direction of lower prices has been reversed from east to west to west to east and, in fact, over one million barrels of crude moved last week from the Ontario region into the Montreal refinery market.

PROPOSED EXTENSION OF PIPELINE FROM TORONTO TO MONTREAL—GOVERNMENT POSITION IN LIGHT OF OPPOSITION BY QUEBEC PREMIER

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North): Mr. Speaker, may I ask a supplementary question. As Premier Bourassa is now opposed to the building of a pipeline from Toronto to Montreal, has the government now withdrawn the idea of constructing that pipeline as announced last week by the Prime Minister?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I will be seeing representatives of the Quebec government this week, as, indeed, I will be seeing representatives of the Alberta government,