

he gave this House on May 15 is worth nothing at all on June 3?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I draw to the attention of the Leader of the Opposition the clarification which I made to that answer on May 25. The hon. member for Simcoe North asked me a question on a particular Friday afternoon which I answered, and I realized before the end of the day it could be misunderstood. The first time I was in the House following that Friday I rose in my place and clarified the answer, because it was ambiguous. I said:

I believe that my answer with respect to no new energy taxes should be interpreted to mean that no new types of taxes are contemplated at the present time.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

● (1425)

Mr. Nowlan: When did you correct your ad?

Mr. MacEachen: Madam Speaker, I went on to say, and I quote:

I do not want to mislead the House or the hon. member so I am taking the first available opportunity to say that no new types of taxes are contemplated at the present time, but obviously the petroleum compensation charge might be increased or indeed decreased, depending upon developments with Alberta, exchange rate developments or international petroleum prices.

I believe instead of the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition's rebuking me for the answer, he should at least acknowledge that at the first opportunity I returned to the House and clarified that answer. That was on May 25, eight days ago. That is the situation.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY DEPARTMENTAL OFFICIALS

Hon. Michael Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Madam Speaker, it is a shame that the Prime Minister is not in the House today to hear from the true source about what real garbage is.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wilson: Let me direct a supplementary question to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources because he did not give an answer to the Leader of the Opposition in response to his question as to why it is necessary at this time to have this blockbuster tax increase imposed on the consumer. Consumption in Canada was down in the months of February and March, the latest two months we have on record, by 10 per cent, which will lead to about a 40 per cent drop in imports. The world price of oil has been level over the last four months, and it looks as if it will be going down because of the world glut. Surely this means that there is less need for a tax increase of this magnitude, or for a tax increase at all.

An hon. Member: Question.

Oral Questions

Mr. Wilson: Would the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources table in this House the recommendations from his officials as to the reasons why it was necessary to hammer the consumer, as he did yesterday, without the courtesy of an explanation to the House regarding the need for this increase?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I would be very happy to repeat why there is a need for this increase. If the hon. member could get his friend, the Premier of Alberta, to abandon—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lalonde: We know who does not want to hear the truth.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: Hypocrite.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Lalonde: If the hon. member wants to prevail upon the Premier of Alberta to abandon his cutbacks, the price of gasoline in this country will immediately be reduced by at least 1.5 cents a litre. That part of the increase is the result of the cutbacks which have been imposed and the punishment which is being imposed upon Canadians and Canadian industry by the government of Alberta. That is part of the explanation.

The other explanation is that the cost of imports has increased because of the value of the Canadian dollar in terms of the rate of exchange. Because of this, increases are required. Of the two cents, the cutback of Alberta represents 1.5 cents a litre, if we take into account the last two cutbacks.

Mr. Wilson: Madam Speaker, I thought I heard the minister say that one of the reasons for this is the drop in the value of the Canadian dollar. Surely the minister understands that the drop in the value of the Canadian dollar is the result of the policies he and his colleague, the Minister of Finance, have followed.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wilson: What the minister is asking Canadians to do is to pay the doctor's bill while he shoots himself in the foot. The minister is misleading the House—

An hon. Member: Too bad it is just the foot.

Mr. Wilson: —on the reasons for this 9-cent increase or the need for it.

● (1430)

REQUEST THAT INCREASE BE ROLLED BACK

Hon. Michael Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): I ask the minister today if he is prepared to roll back this price increase, have a debate in this House as to the reasons for the increase and, if they can be justified, then to proceed? But do not hammer the consumer today without presenting that case to the House.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!