department is conducting into the simultaneous closing of *The Ottawa Journal* and the Winnipeg *Tribune*. Is the minister prepared to tell us whether his department has in fact completed that investigation and what his intentions are? Will he be referring information from that investigation to the Minister of Justice for possible action?

[*Translation*]

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Postmaster General): Madam Speaker, the director of investigations is completing his investigation. As soon as it is completed, he will report to me and I will then make a decision on the basis of his recommendations. For the time being, it is too soon and I do not want to prejudice his findings.

[*English*]

Mr. Skelly: Madam Speaker, I suspected the conclusions might have already been available, but in any event I have a supplementary question. Does the minister have any intention at all of acting on the fact that the Ottawa paper has now given notice that it intends to increase its advertising rates by some 25 per cent, and the Winnipeg paper, with the absolute lack of competition, has now indicated that it will be increasing its advertising rates to the tune of roughly 35 per cent? Now that this particular monopoly exists and the department seems to be fairly slow in completing this investigation, will the minister be taking any action related to these very dramatic hikes with an absolute lack of competition?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ouellet: I will be pleased to convey immediately to the director of investigations the hon. member's representations.

[*English*]

Mr. Skelly: Madam Speaker, I have a final question. Our long-term concern is that we are dealing with a whole variety of problems. Is the minister prepared to tell us when he will be bringing forward some legislation to prevent these kinds of things, rather than attempting to do very unsuccessful autopsies on them after the event?

An hon. Member: Start a paper.

Mr. Skelly: When in fact can we expect some legislation on controlling this lack of competition?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ouellet: Madam Speaker, obviously the legislation on competition in Canada will have to be amended to be much more effective, and I share the views of the hon. member in that respect. To be more specific, I hope to introduce a bill to do just that early next year.

● (1425)

[*English*]

ENERGY

NATURAL GAS EXPORT TAX—GOVERNMENT POLICY

Mr. Harvie Andre (Calgary Centre): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. The government's decision of last Friday not to raise the export price of natural gas on February 1, 1981, means that the export tax which will come into effect that day will not be paid by U.S. consumers but by Canadian producers and consumers. In answer to a question from the hon. member for Vancouver Centre on October 29, reported at page 4208 of *Hansard,* the minister said:

Are hon. members suggesting that we should levy a tax on Canadian consumers and not levy it on American consumers? Is that their policy?

My question to the minister is, very simply, is that his policy?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): No, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Andre: On the same day, October 29, in justifying his natural gas export tax and domestic tax, the minister said:

We thought no one could take exception to a tax levied on all consumers which affects all consumers, whether in Canada or the United States.

Given that these taxes will be paid only by Canadian consumers and not by American consumers, will the minister now cancel these taxes since his rationale or reasoning, at least as he gave it to the House on October 29, no longer applies?

Mr. MacEachen: Madam Speaker, I disagree with the hon. member's interpretation of the rationale and reason. The tax is still in existence. What the hon. member has failed to note, obviously, is that the price of natural gas to the United States has not been increased at the present time at the request of the western provinces and the producing companies. There will be a further announcement made before mid-December but in the meantime there has been no withdrawal of the tax.

Mr. Andre: Madam Speaker, the rationale I quoted was the minister's rationale. He said the reason he had gone for this export tax plus domestic tax was that he would tax U.S. consumers as well as Canadian consumers. Given this decision to delay this price increase on February 1, which means that Canadian producers and consumers are the only ones paying this tax, will he at least delay the date of implementation until the rationale which he established comes into effect?

Mr. MacEachen: Madam Speaker, the hon. member still does not understand the situation. The tax is still in effect. The producing provinces and the producing companies asked us to defer this particular price increase, and in the meantime they will bear the tax. We agreed to their representations but the tax will continue to prevail as we announced it. We announced this postponement as a result of the representations that were made by the producing provinces. We were attempting to be accommodating in this matter, and I am surprised that the