

Oral Questions

use the minister's own terms, of Canada's oil supply this winter, particularly in eastern Canada. A few weeks ago, in answer to a question, the minister indicated that an oil shipment leaving Iran today would reach Canada on December 14, and that another shipment would leave Iran on January 4 and arrive on February 5. Can the minister tell us, first, whether the loading of the December 3 shipment is proceeding normally and whether we can count on this oil being delivered? Also, can he tell us whether Canada expects a fifth shipment which is not scheduled yet in addition to the January 4 one, which would reach Canada later during 1980, so as to ensure that we will not experience any oil shortage this winter?

● (1450)

[*English*]

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I can tell the hon. member that this morning I communicated with the president of Gulf with respect to the present circumstances on shipment of crude to Canada from Iran. He confirmed that the second shipment is, in fact, very close to delivery in eastern Canada and we should expect it.

Also, he indicated to me that he expects arrangements will be made relating to additional shipments at the beginning of the New Year. Due to the uncertainty in terms of the Iranian situation, it is impossible to say whether or not that will be the source of supply. But the company is working very hard to obtain alternate sources of supply with respect to crude. They are very optimistic that that, in fact, will be received by us in February.

[*Translation*]

INQUIRY WHETHER FIFTH OIL SHIPMENT WILL ARRIVE FROM IRAN

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Outremont): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary. My question may have confused the minister a little. I wanted to know if another shipment is scheduled after the January 4 shipment. Could the minister confirm that this fourth shipment is indeed scheduled for early in 1980, or is there some connection between this shipment and the lack of vigour with which the government is dealing with the matter of the hostages' release in Iran?

[*English*]

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I find it rather strange that the hon. member would raise this point with respect to further deliveries from Iran when his leader, not five minutes ago, indicated that we should impose a sanction with respect to deliveries from Iran.

The fact is that the corporation indicated to me today, in the discussions, that they are not only bringing in supplies in terms of light crude which will be brought to the refineries here, but also are investigating in a very serious way the importation of

product to supply Canadian needs over the course of this winter.

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GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMITTEE WHICH WILL DUPLICATE WORK OF STANDING COMMITTEE

Mr. Donald J. Johnston (Saint-Henri-Westmount): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board. As the House is aware, the government has announced its intention to appoint a special committee to look into cost overruns on major government projects, which would appear to be part of the mandate of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Therefore, my question to the President of the Treasury Board is: during this period of concern with government expenditure, how can he justify the establishment of a committee which effectively would duplicate the mandate of a standing committee of this House?

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (President of Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that the hon. member has asked me that question, because it gives me an opportunity to draw the significant distinction between the work the special committee will be doing and the very good work which the Standing Committee on Public Accounts does with regard to such things as major capital expenditures.

The special committee will deal with the present: it will deal with jobs that are ongoing, where we have been told that there could be overruns as much as 400 per cent from the original estimate. We would like that committee today to tell us what we can do to arrest this dreadful situation with such overruns. I hope the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will carry on its good work of looking at the deals which were reported on, say, two years ago by the Auditor General, and of drawing up more general guidelines as to what might be done of a more general nature in order to have a more satisfactory management system in Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Johnston: Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board does not appear to be aware of the current work of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and the Study of Procedures in Cost Effectiveness on an ongoing basis which the Auditor General is carrying out.

My question is: since the work, essentially, has had this same objective, non-partisan approach, surely it would be appropriate to appoint a member of the opposition as chairman of such a committee, in the same spirit as the Right Hon. John Diefenbaker established in 1957, that a member of the opposition should be chairman of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Speaker, if I may reply to the hon. member, in no way do we wish to see the Standing Committee