

CONSUMER AFFAIRS

ALLEGED MISLEADING ADVERTISING FOR NON-LEADED GASOLINE—POSSIBILITY OF PROSECUTION

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs I should like to direct my question to the Minister of Justice. Is there any intention to proceed with prosecutions under Section 37 of the combines act in respect of false and misleading advertising claims regarding non-leaded gasoline, in light of tests which were carried out and referred to on the CBC program "Market Place" last night, which indicated that non-leaded gasoline was not more economic than leaded gasoline?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, we would follow our ordinary practice of investigating potential or apparent violations and give consideration to prosecution in each individual case. Obviously, I am not in a position to make a blanket announcement as to how we will proceed.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, I would direct my supplementary question to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. Is he now prepared to answer the question directed to his minister by the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham last Thursday in relation to looking into these claims, whether or not tests have been conducted by the government and whether the department intends to proceed under the provisions of the Combines Investigation Act to lay charges against those who would make these false and misleading claims?

Mr. Norman A. Cafik (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that if in fact there are false and misleading claims in respect of non-leaded gasoline this department will do everything it can to pursue them and prosecute under the law. At the present moment, we have no specific evidence before us which would indicate that this in fact is the case. If the hon. member or anyone else of the general public has information that would warrant that kind of action it should be brought to our attention, and the public can be assured that action would be taken within the law.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, I would like to refer the parliamentary secretary and members of the government to the revelations contained in the CBC program "Market Place" shown on the national network last evening which clearly substantiated this claim.

Mr. Cafik: Mr. Speaker, there is quite a distinction in the law between statements made and something being proved. I am not in any way suggesting that the statements made were not factual, but is necessary under the law to make a determination of these statements. When that is made, we will act according to the facts as they are.

Oral Questions

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

PROPOSED COMMITTEE STUDY OF CIDA OPERATIONS

Mr. Douglas Roche (Edmonton-Strathcona): Mr. Speaker, in view of the current publicity surrounding CIDA in the *Ottawa Journal* and other newspapers, which is damaging the credibility of the Canadian International Assistance Program, will the Secretary of State for External Affairs recommend that a special reference be made to the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence to examine whether CIDA programs are producing beneficial results to developing countries, and whether in fact Canadian money is being well spent, since that is the central question at issue?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I believe that the questions at issue are important. As the President of the Privy Council stated earlier in reply to a question, it will not be the intention to make a special reference to the standing committee, but the standing committee, in dealing with the estimates of CIDA, can carry out all the probing necessary to disclose the information in respect of the questions my hon. friend proposes. I hope the committee will take advantage of that opportunity. I certainly will co-operate with it in providing the fullest possible information.

PROPOSED PARLIAMENTARY REVIEW OF EXTERNAL AID PROGRAMS

Mr. Douglas Roche (Edmonton-Strathcona): Mr. Speaker, bearing in mind the limitations of the standing committee at the time of its consideration of estimates, will the minister recommend to the government that it is in the country's interest at this time to have a complete parliamentary review of the ways Canada is involved in helping developing countries, through not only CIDA programs but through our policies affecting the United Nations, trade and monetary reform, so that parliament and the country can get a complete picture of what we are doing and the new directions we ought to take?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, that general objective is praiseworthy and wholesome, and can be achieved in the way I have described.

An hon. Member: It is also necessary.

ADEQUACY OF REFERENCE OF ESTIMATES OF CIDA TO COMMITTEE

Mr. Donald W. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct my supplementary question to the government House leader. Based on what he learned in London earlier this month, especially about select committees, are the President of the Privy Council and the government House leader persuaded that the routine and virtually meaningless reference of estimates and supplementary estimates of CIDA to the Committee on External Affairs and National Defence provides an adequate opportunity to parliament to examine government expenditures in this area and to bring to light programs