

Mr. Roy MacLaren (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the inquiry into the oil industry in Canada the government recognizes that the public, as well as the parties concerned, deserve to have its results confirmed as quickly as possible. However, this inquiry is one of the largest ever undertaken under competition legislation. Its scope relates to numerous sectors of a highly integrated industry as well as covering a long period.

While inquiries are conducted in private pursuant to section 27(1) of the Combines Investigation Act, there have been occasions when information relating to the pursuit of this particular inquiry has come to public attention from sources other than the office of the director of investigation and research in the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. As a result, it is possible to advise the House on a number of steps this inquiry has followed.

The inquiry commenced in 1973 when the then director of investigation and research received an application pursuant to section 7 of the act applying for an inquiry into the conduct of a number of oil companies. This application was made by the Consumers Association of Canada, which informed the media of it. Subsequently, the director exercised his full formal powers to conduct searches of the premises of a large number of oil companies pursuant to section 10 of the act. The director removed documents deemed to be relevant to his inquiry. In

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addition, hearings before the Restrictive Trade Practices Commission were held where company officials were examined. The director also requested that oil companies respond to a detailed request for information and has also interviewed many individuals and petroleum trade associations who wanted to provide information.

It has also become public that during the course of this inquiry Petrofina Canada Limited commenced proceedings in the Federal Court questioning the validity of the procedures. The Federal Court denied this challenge. However, the Supreme Court has granted leave to appeal this denial, so it would be inappropriate to make any conjecture on the outcome, which is expected later this year, or on the effect of the challenge to the inquiry.

The director has pursued his investigation in an exhaustive manner while at the same time fulfilling his statutory obligations under the act as other matters have arisen. Given the nature of this inquiry, the effort already expended and its current stage, the government believes that the public interest will best be served by allowing it to follow its course as prescribed in the Combines Investigation Act.

[Translation]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at two o'clock.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.27 p.m.