

*Oral Questions***ENERGY**

OIL COMPANIES' SHARE OF INCREASE IN PRICE OF GASOLINE

Mr. Ian Waddell (Vancouver-Kingsway): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. I wish to return to the matter of oil prices. If the minister filled his gas tank on Sunday, as did many Canadians, he found that gas costs two to three cents a litre more. Will the minister confirm these figures, that of the increase, .7 cents was due to the regular increase with the 1981 price coming on stream, .5 cents was due to the Lalonde-Lougheed levy the other day, and 1.5 cents was due to the oil companies charging for so-called increased production costs? Will the minister confirm those figures, and the fact that the oil companies have piggybacked an additional 1.5-cent increase on to the .5-cent increase which came in as a result of prices going up?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I want first to tell the hon. member that I filled my gas tank only on Tuesday in order to avoid any leak about what was coming.

Mr. Lawrence: You mean the government car?

Mr. Lalonde: My own. I want to confirm to the hon. member that several oil companies did take advantage of the increase arising from the \$1 increase in January. They doubled the amount of the increase. I wrote to my colleague, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, and asked that the protection of consumers division examine this matter and advise whether the increases were proper in the circumstances. As far as the total price is concerned, I remind the hon. member that at the present time in Toronto, for example, the price at the pump is still 9.45 cents a gallon less than it would have been under the Conservative budget had it passed.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Waddell: That is not a sufficient answer. As far as the Canadian public is concerned, both the Conservatives and Liberals are parties of high prices.

Mr. Malone: Only the NDP are cheap.

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CORPORATE AFFAIRS

QUERY RESPECTING NATIONALIZATION OF OIL COMPANIES

Mr. Ian Waddell (Vancouver-Kingsway): I will direct my supplementary question to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, since he is full of gas today. Will the minister confirm that because of the complicity of his government and previous Liberal and Conservative governments, the Canadian public, as shown by the report he is going to release this afternoon, has lost the equivalent of over \$80 billion to the oil companies through overcharges and poor marketing prac-

tics? Will the minister tell us, if he is not prepared to bring in legislation, restitution, or prosecution, whether he is prepared to advocate to cabinet public ownership of these companies?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Postmaster General): Madam Speaker, I am happy to report that the mail is moving. I received a letter from my colleague and, at his request, my officials are looking at the matter.

Second, I want to assure the hon. member that the evidence gathered by the director will be presented, and obviously challenged and thoroughly discussed, before the Restrictive Trade Practices Commission. The figures he refers to as rip-offs are figures that were allegedly gathered by the director of combines. Obviously they will be tested and the commission will make its findings. We will have to wait until the commission reports before we can be certain of these allegations. If they are true and the commission finds that the consumers of Canada have been ripped off, the government will take its responsibility and act accordingly.

I remind the hon. member that even before the report was made public the government had gone a long way toward Canadianizing this industry. It is to the credit of the government that it has already begun moving in this direction.

GOVERNMENT POSITION RESPECTING INQUIRY FINDINGS

Hon. Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Madam Speaker, the concern of the House is whether the government has indeed taken its responsibility with respect to this matter and with regard to the course of action it has taken. The minister is no doubt aware of Section 15 of the Combines Investigation Act which says that the director may, at any stage of an inquiry, including the beginning of an inquiry as is the case today, refer any record, etc. to the Attorney General to see whether an offence has been or is about to be committed against the act, and for such action as the Attorney General of Canada may be pleased to take. The obvious question is whether this has been submitted to the Attorney General and, if so, when. If it has been submitted and advice was obtained by the director, what was the advice? What is the state of affairs? It appears to the House that the minister is most inconclusive with respect to the intentions of the government on this matter.

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Postmaster General): Madam Speaker, the hon. member referred to Section 15 of the act. The director decided to act according to Section 47. He exercised his option and the matter is now before the Restrictive Trade Practices Commission.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): The question is whether that is the appropriate option under the circumstances, and what will be the outcome. It appears in his report that there are many actions started which are ultimately dropped. If an offence has been committed, the companies should be charged. The minister has not answered my question. The question is