

Oral Questions

● (1415)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

NATIONAL ENERGY PROGRAM

EFFECTS ON MANUFACTURING SECTOR OF ECONOMY

Mr. Harvie Andre (Calgary Centre): Madam Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, I wish to direct my questions to the Minister of Finance.

This morning the Canadian Manufacturers' Association and six other industrial associations representing manufacturers of chemicals, electronics, steel and plastics, issued a joint press release expressing their opinion that under Canada's current energy program our chances of becoming self-sufficient are nil. The association predicted dire consequences to Canada, and to their industries, as a result of this policy. It seems the government is unconcerned about the effects of the energy program on the oil and gas industry. Is the minister concerned about the effects of the program on the manufacturing sector—a program he authored on October 28—which, according to these industrial representatives, will be very severe indeed unless changes are made soon?

Mr. Roy MacLaren (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, the hon. member opposite will be aware that in the National Energy Program there are incentives to encourage the development of the petroleum industry in Canada, both in conventional lands and in frontier areas. In addition, certain changes have been made as a result of discussions with industry which will further encourage the development of this dynamic sector of our economy.

VIEWS OF MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES

Mr. Harvie Andre (Calgary Centre): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is to the acting minister, the Minister of Finance, or someone who knows what is going on in the energy sector in this country.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Judy Erola.

Mr. Andre: Perhaps the Minister of State for Mines is the acting minister of energy and can cast some light on the government's thinking.

These six associations representing manufacturing interests—not the oil and gas industry—stated in their press release that now is the time to get going to obtain maximum employment and economic benefits from what should be a progressive and ongoing energy policy. As a result of the current policy, they have pointed out that their industries face very uncertain and very difficult times ahead. My question to the minister is this: if she does not accept this view of these manufacturing industries which have released this report today, could she please explain where their thinking is in error and how six very

respected, non-partisan associations, could arrive at such an erroneous view?

An hon. Member: Sit down, Roy.

Hon. Judy Erola (Minister of State (Mines)): Madam Speaker, obviously the member is aware, as are most members in the House, that those projects have been cut back by the province of Alberta, not by the federal government. The companies involved have been offered a \$38 price which would give them the base to go ahead with the projects. It has been the province's choice to cut back on these particular projects.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

REQUEST FOR INTRODUCTION OF NEW BUDGET

Mr. Harvie Andre (Calgary Centre): Madam Speaker, we now know that the parliamentary secretary is not aware of what is going on and, the acting minister is not aware of what is going on.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Andre: I am going to try again and ask my question of the Minister of Finance since he authored the budget which brought forward these disastrous policies. Given that virtually the entire Canadian business community, small business, the bankers' association, the manufacturers' association and, of course, the oil and gas industry, recognize that a failure to change the National Energy Program will result in tremendous economic costs to Canada, if the Minister of Finance is not concerned about the effects on the oil and gas industry is he concerned about the effects on all of these other industries? Does he dismiss the view of the entire business community in Canada? If he thinks these people have some reasoning behind their concerns, will he tell the House when he will be bringing in a new budget to correct the damage being done by the energy policy which he brought forward on October 28?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, it would not be correct to suggest that the government or the Minister of Finance is not interested in the views of the business community with respect to the impact of the National Energy Program or, indeed, the views of the oil and gas industry. As the hon. member knows, since the budget, on two separate occasions, I have tabled modifications to the tax regime as a result of suggestions made by the oil and gas industry. On each occasion they have said yes, they think these changes are worth while but they would like more changes. I want to give the hon. member that information as evidence of our willingness to listen and to respond. I want to add further that I disagree with the analysis that he has taken as his own, namely, the analysis presented by a group of members of the business community.