

Oral Questions

week, he could explain to the House the debt status of Canadair at the present time. I understand that the government is giving it letters of comfort which have enabled it to borrow something over \$1 billion. I wonder if the minister could tell the House, within \$100 million, how deeply in debt Canadair is at the present time.

Hon. Herb Gray (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): I will be happy to do that, Madam Speaker. Not long ago, the House, in the supplementary estimates, approved authority to the government to guarantee up to \$1.3 billion in loans by private sector companies to Canadair to help provide operating capital for the carrying out of its projects.

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ENERGY

PROPOSED NATURAL GAS PRICE INCREASE IN ONTARIO

Mr. Geoff Scott (Hamilton-Wentworth): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. There are vast numbers of consumers in the province of Ontario who are angry about a proposed huge increase in the price of natural gas after the Government of Canada implored people to convert from oil to gas for home heating fuel. I recognize that permission for Consumers' Gas to raise its rates comes under Ontario provincial jurisdiction, but can the minister say whether there is anything that he can do to temper this increase to these consumers?

[Translation]

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Yes, Madam Speaker. I suggest that the hon. member who asked the question and who is a distinguished member of the Progressive Conservative Party, speak to his friends who are running the government in Toronto.

[English]

REPRESENTATIONS TO ONTARIO ENERGY BOARD

Mr. Geoff Scott (Hamilton-Wentworth): Madam Speaker, I quite realize that Ontario consumers are affected by the government of this province, but will the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, as a federal minister, also protecting the interests of consumers of this province, join me in persuading the Ontario Energy Board to reduce these proposed gas rates in the interest of keeping prices down and combatting inflation?

[Translation]

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Madam Speaker, if the hon. member believes that my support could be of any help, with pleasure.

• (1500)

[English]

PRIVILEGE

MR. COLLENETTE—ALLEGED IMPUTING OF MOTIVES BY MR. THACKER—RULING BY MADAM SPEAKER

Madam Speaker: I would like to rule on the question of privilege which was raised by the hon. member for York East (Mr. Collette). The hon. member raised a question of privilege alleging that on May 25 the hon. member for Lethbridge-Foothills (Mr. Thacker) imputed motives to Liberal backbenchers.

I just want to say that disrespectful or offensive language is covered by Standing Order 35 and that the unparliamentary words must be brought to the attention of the House by way of a point of order, not by way of a question of privilege. Therefore I cannot accept that the hon. member had the basis for a question of privilege.

Having examined what might have been a point of order, I looked at the words used by the hon. member for Lethbridge-Foothills. I found that he was not exactly addressing his remarks to any member individually. Erskine May says at page 430 of the Nineteenth Edition:

Expressions which are unparliamentary when applied to individuals are not always so considered when applied to a whole party.

In the words of my predecessor, Speaker Lamoureux, I would say that these kinds of exchanges are part of the political life of the House. However, I would urge hon. members to try to use language that is acceptable to all members on all sides of the House.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Pinard: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have had consultations with my colleagues on the other side with regard to statements by ministers. I would like a House order to ensure that at eight o'clock we will be in a position to revert to statements by ministers in order to allow the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to make a statement at eight o'clock this evening. If you seek unanimous consent, Madam Speaker, I think you will find it, following consultations I had with my colleagues.

Madam Speaker: Does the House give its unanimous consent to revert to statements by ministers at eight o'clock this evening?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.