

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Nowlan: There is only one opposition.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Can we now hear the hon. member for Oshawa?

Mr. Broadbent: Madam Speaker, I just want to say that I have read the leadership polls as they have—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Broadbent: A couple of weeks ago the Minister of Finance stated the following in the House:

—there is no plan in my department to launch a program of wage controls.

Earlier this week I obtained a document from his department clearly outlining a process by which wage controls could be implemented. I would like the minister to clear up this confusion completely today by assuring the House that no wage controls in any form will be introduced in 1981.

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, there is no plan in the department; I have no plan; I have brought no plan before cabinet to introduce wage and price controls.

POLICY TO COMBAT INFLATION

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, I trust everyone noted that the Minister of Finance did not answer the question. He did not give us an assurance that wage controls will not be introduced this year. He knows, as well as I, that a secret document has been discussed in his department which lays out precisely a program for the implementation of wage controls, whether or not the government has yet decided to act upon it.

The same document makes clear that wages have not been the cause of inflation, but points to many other causes. Since the government has ruled out a fair prices commission, has turned down a policy which would lower interest rates—and, incidentally, they have just gone up again today—and has ruled out every other specific suggestion to control inflation made by this party and others, is he prepared to announce today one new policy to bring down the level of inflation, or is he saying to the people of Canada that they will have to sit back and take it?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I want to repeat and amplify what I said earlier to the hon. member for Oshawa. I have seen no program anywhere in any document in my department for wage and price controls. I have no hesitation in telling the hon. member that no such proposal has been presented to me, that no such proposal has been approved by me, that no such proposal has been brought by me to cabinet. That is the situation. I remind the hon. member that he is asking me to say what may happen in 1981, 1982 or 1983.

Mr. Broadbent: No. This year, 1981.

Oral Questions

Mr. MacEachen: It is rather irresponsible to request—

Mr. Broadbent: Oh!

Mr. MacEachen:—an assurance from me about a hypothetical possibility. If he wants a straight answer, the answer is that there is no plan whatsoever to bring in wage and price controls. If the situation changes, I assure him that in the normal course the House and the hon. member will be notified.

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ENERGY

PRICING PRACTICES OF OIL COMPANIES—REQUEST THAT GASOLINE PRICE INCREASE BE ROLLED BACK

Mr. Ian Waddell (Vancouver-Kingsway): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. It concerns energy, about which he can do something. Twenty-two days ago in the House I asked the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs about the six cents increase oil companies piggybacked on the most recent increase in the cost of gasoline. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources confirmed that rip-off.

Here is something which is visible and concrete, an anti-inflationary step which the minister can take right now; he will not have to wait until 1982 or 1983. Is the minister prepared to stand up and tell the House that he will roll back that six cents increase in the price of gasoline?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, of course I am not going to stand up and say that I will roll back that price.

Mr. Waddell: Why not?

Mr. MacEachen: Because I have no authority to do it. I remind the hon. member that this morning I picked up a newspaper and read that the Premier of Saskatchewan was saying the present policy of restraining world oil prices was insanity.

Mr. Waddell: It is not the same thing.

Mr. MacEachen: The hon. member must try to reconcile the various differing views which exist on the question of increases in oil prices. One thing which is clear is that at least the Premier of Saskatchewan has a view; he wants higher oil prices. The New Democratic Party has been very careful in the House to avoid any clear statement on where it stood on this very important point, except to come in from the margin and ask about six cents cost increases made by oil companies. Why don't you face the issue head on, frontally, and tell us what your policy is?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

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