

*Oral Questions*

been in operation and I expect it will continue in operation until the end of the agreement in 1986.

## QUERY RESPECTING IMPACT OF OIL PRICE ON ECONOMY

**Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox-Powell River):** Madam Speaker, for approximately a year I have been trying to deal with the document put forward by the Minister. I certainly think it is relevant at this point in time to explain to the House—

**Mr. Ouellet:** Question.

**Mr. Skelly:**—how that national energy policy may provide some economic recovery based on the governments promise. Is the Minister prepared to stand up and make a statement on the subject of how projections of economic recovery will be enhanced by keeping the promise which the Government made to keep the Canadian price of oil below the level of the world price instead of, as I think the answer indicates, breaking it and pushing it up toward world levels?

**Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, the Canadian oil price is below international prices. I do not know what my hon. friend is referring to—

**Mr. Waddell:** He said going up toward world price.

**Mr. Lalonde:** He should look at the facts. The fact is that the oil price in Canada is below the international price. That has been the case since 1980; in fact, well before that, since 1974. This has been the policy of this Government.

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● (1440)

## THE ADMINISTRATION

## CAPE BRETON COAL AGREEMENT—TIME LAPSE IN CLARIFYING INFORMATION

**Hon. Erik Nielsen (Leader of the Opposition):** Madam Speaker, the Minister of Finance has just taken the Hon. Member for Comox-Powell River to task for alleged non-representation of facts during his preamble. I want to refer the Minister to February 16 when the "Coalgate" affair was first raised in the House by myself by way of questions to him, two of them with respect to his capacity to continue as a Minister of the Crown. Those questions were referred to the Minister of Energy.

The following day the Prime Minister informed the House, based on information from the Minister of Finance, that the Minister of Finance had examined his diaries, his papers and his files, and knew nothing of the affair until September, 1981. He later changed that in a subsequent letter to the Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister informed us on Wednesday, February 23.

Can the Minister explain to the House why, from February 16 through to February 23, knowing that the House had been fed false information, he sat there day in and day out without

clarifying the misleading of the House? Can he explain why he sat there and allowed to House to believe the misinformation?

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. I believe that this question does not refer to the Hon. Minister of Finance's responsibility as Minister of Finance. The Hon. Minister is a better judge than I of what falls within his range, but it seems to me that this question concerns a record of the Hon. Minister when he was Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Therefore he is not able to answer a question dealing with that period in the House at this time. I would ask another Minister to answer.

**Mr. Lalonde:** If I may, Madam Speaker, this deals with a letter that I wrote to the Prime Minister. It refers to my behaviour. I think that the Hon. Leader of the Opposition is right to ask the question, and I would beg to have the privilege to answer the question.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Madam Speaker:** It is difficult for me to judge if the Hon. Minister is answering in his capacity now as Minister of Finance or for something that happened in the course of his mandate as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. If it is as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, I am sorry—I would like the Hon. Minister to have a chance to correct any record that he would like to correct—but he cannot answer a question regarding something that took place at the time he was Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

**Mr. Nielsen:** The whole House is interested in the response of the Minister. Surely he can be heard.

**Madam Speaker:** I know that the whole House is interested. But Hon. Members know that the rules we have should be very strictly followed. That is the only way to have this place function properly.

**Mr. Lalonde:** Madam Speaker, I again beg you to give me permission to answer this question. I am sure the House would give me permission to answer this question because it does relate to my action of last week or ten days ago of writing a letter to the Prime Minister. The Hon. Leader of the Opposition is asking me what happened in the interval between the time that I sent the first letter and the time I sent the second letter. Surely this happened while I was Minister of Finance. Surely I am entitled to provide the answer to the Hon. Member. I would urge you to let me give that answer. I am sure that the Opposition is quite willing to let me give it.

**Madam Speaker:** I find that very difficult to decide. Of course it is something that happened last week or the week before when the Hon. Minister was Minister of Finance, but it concerns something that happened when he was Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. There are other places where the Hon. Minister can put statements on the record. Therefore, he might do that outside the House, or on another occasion.