

however, that the agreement could not have been one along the lines I have suggested.

[Translation]

Mr. René Matte (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that we must welcome the agreement concluded between the federal and provincial governments.

Now, an analysis of that agreement shows that it is necessary to make some reservations. We are wondering how can anyone fully justify the policy of an entirely artificial increase based exclusively on incidents which happened abroad. We can hardly admit it. If our country can produce a useful commodity essential to Canadian consumers, our first concern should be to enable our citizens to take advantage of our natural resources which are not costly. Therefore, we accept the principle of that purely artificial increase, but with many reservations.

There are other parts of the agreement about which it is important to mention a few facts. It is said that the price is set for all of Canada. I agree with that, but this does not take the transportation issue into consideration. However, since there are no details on how the government will organize transportation or subsidize it if need be, the price in some areas of Canada could depend totally upon transportation, about which we have insufficient data.

Moreover, this agreement, which basically seems to solve a problem, will benefit only the oil companies or the provincial governments of Saskatchewan and Alberta, if they wish. It remains that the Canadian consumer seems to have been forgotten, since throughout this whole energy pseudo-crisis, because it was a pseudo-crisis, the multinational companies were allowed to make windfall profits to such a point that we may wonder if we would not find in Canada scandals like those that happened in Italy, for instance, if we looked for them.

Mr. Speaker, if there is need to settle the basic price problem it is also imperative to think about a solution to the one regarding retail prices to consumers. It concerns everybody, fuel oil as well as gas consumers. Nothing has been done in that connection and we, at least in my constituency, can stop at a service station and buy regular gas at 57 cents. Twenty miles farther it can cost 70 cents and some place else 77 cents. Now, this is the consumption level, at the level therefore where the Canadian citizen is hardest hit. There is nothing definite to that effect in the agreement.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that the government should, in consulting provinces, undertake a thorough investigation on this so as to be able to make it clear that at first price increases were completely unaccountable. We had rather concrete evidence of it when the government, becoming a little jittery, decided to buy fuel oil abroad at an excessive price, but did not know where to store it because warehouses were full. Mr. Speaker, this oil was paid at a very low price for that time. However, companies immediately increased the retail price, thus making huge profits.

In short, basic prices should be controlled and attempts made to set up a uniform price. Consideration should also be given to setting up, not controls maybe, but consumption standards.

It has been said that the export tax will limit consumption, although nobody knows quite how. If we want to

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bring the price of imported oil, which generally sells for \$10.50 at the present time, down to the proposed level of \$6.50, how are we going to share the \$4 difference? Will it be refunded to consumers or returned to the provincial government? We must be very careful, especially in the province of Quebec, for this province is very much interested. We are all aware that the Quebec government is past master in accepting federal funds and using them as it sees fit.

The \$4 difference might not even be passed on to consumers. We should need more detailed information to be in a better position to judge this agreement; nevertheless, we hope that it will benefit the whole of Canada.

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[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

ANNOUNCEMENT OF ORDER AMPLIFYING SERVICE REGULATIONS GOVERNING USE OF NAVAL RANKS

Hon. James Richardson (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I wish to announce that an order will be issued today within the Department of National Defence to amplify service regulations governing the use of naval ranks. Naval ranks are listed in column two of Section 21 of the National Defence Act and include all naval ranks from ordinary seaman to admiral.

Under the new order, all personnel will use and be referred to by their naval rank if they are in the naval operations branch, and employed in Maritime Command, in a ship or other vessel, or in a ship repair unit.

Provision is also made in the regulations for personnel to continue to use naval ranks upon leaving the naval operations branch if they wish to do so.

In addition, all personnel in the naval reserves as well as all sea cadet instructors will use naval ranks. Finally, Mr. Speaker, all officers and other ranks who were serving as members of the Royal Canadian Navy prior to unification of February 1, 1968, may elect to use their appropriate naval rank regardless of where they are now serving.

I would like to emphasize that it is our intention to achieve all possible advantages from unification, but I believe, as I have stated at other times, that it is important for members of the Canadian Armed Forces to identify themselves with the traditions and accomplishments of individual units of the service.

● (1450)

This order on the use of naval ranks will take effect today, March 28, 1974. It honours the commitment made to members of the Royal Canadian Navy at the time the three services were unified into the Canadian Armed Forces.

Hon. Paul Hellyer (Trinity): Mr. Speaker, we welcome this announcement on the part of the minister. It is, as he has suggested, consistent with the commitment made at the time the unification bill was approved by parliament. It will clarify the circumstances in which naval ranks may appropriately be used, and this clarification will, I am sure, be well received by armed forces personnel.