

National Energy Program

● (2200)

As to the last point referred to by my hon. friend, it is clear that the Government of Alberta, the producing provinces generally, and the Government of Canada see their revenues considerably reduced between 1982 and 1986 compared with the forecasts which were made at the time of the Alberta agreement last September because of increases which are less than was anticipated. Obviously this has an impact on fiscal arrangements, and the Minister of Finance will have to bear these facts in mind when he presents a review of the budget estimates over the next few years.

[Translation]

Madam Speaker: At this point, a motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 is deemed to have been moved and seconded—

[English]

The Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition is rising on a point of order?

Mr. Clark: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I understand that there was unanimous agreement to give the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Lalonde) the opportunity to make a statement on motions tonight. There are two points which I want to raise. One is that, to my knowledge, there was no indication at that time that there would be a limitation upon the right of Members of Parliament to put questions to the minister in relation to his unusually long statement. Indeed, there was no indication that the normal hour of ten o'clock would be invoked in these circumstances. Second, I think there is an open question as to whether or not the House is still at the stage of motions.

The House will recall that at an earlier stage this evening, without any notice to the deputy House leader of the Official Opposition, there was a request made for an opportunity to revert to motions to present a report of the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Since the deputy House leader of the Official Opposition had not been advised—and the House knows that the normal practice is to advise the deputy House leader or his representative in such a circumstance—consent was not given.

There has now been, as I understand it, some conversation with regard to the opportunity to have that motion presented again by a member now in the House, with the right under our rules to present that standing committee report. I know the House would not want, perhaps inadvertently, to act in a way which would prevent the will of a standing committee of the House from being heard.

For both those reasons, I beg Madam Speaker's indulgence to allow the House of Commons to continue its work past the normal hour of ten o'clock, first to allow us to question the minister on an unusually important and unusually long statement on motions and, second, to provide the House with an opportunity to consider again, now that all parties have been advised, the wisdom and the possibility of allowing the whole House to receive a report of a standing committee of the

House which, if not received today, would not become effective.

Mr. Pinard: Madam Speaker, the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) raised two points which are well covered by the Standing Orders. I am sorry to say that he is absolutely wrong on both of them. In the first point he raised he said that he did not expect, since we gave unanimous consent to allow the minister to make a statement in the House as opposed to outside the House, questions to be limited. He should know that in Standing Order 15(3) it is spelled out very clearly that after the statement of the minister Madam Speaker has the discretion to allow a few brief questions on the matter and that the length of time is left to her discretion. I think that after two hours ample time has been given, but in any case it is at your discretion. I am sure the minister will be here tomorrow during question period to answer further questions on the matter.

For the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, I should like to quote Standing Order 15(3), which reads:

On Statements by Ministers, as listed in section (2) of this Standing Order, a Minister of the Crown may make a short factual announcement or statement of government policy. A spokesman for each of the parties in opposition to the government may comment briefly thereon and Members may be permitted—

It reads, "may be permitted", not must be permitted. It continues:

—to address questions thereon to the Minister. Mr. Speaker shall limit the time for such proceedings as he deems fit.

● (2205)

The standing orders are very clear. It is at Your Honour's discretion. It is not because we agreed to allow the minister to make his statement at eight o'clock tonight in the House of Commons as opposed to outside the House that we should automatically agree to long questions and agree to go beyond Standing Order 15(3). May I add Beauchesne's Citation 263—

[Translation]

—page 87, fifth edition, and I quote:

263. A brief question and answer period may follow the Minister's statement and Opposition comments. The length of this period is left to the discretion of the Speaker by the Standing Order.

Madam Speaker, I think it is quite clear you have been extremely generous and patient. Tomorrow, the minister will be in the House during question period, and at that time he will be able to provide even more appropriate answers to questions which, I hope, will be more sensible than those demanding his resignation, as was the case during the last comments made by hon. members.

[English]

The second point raised by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) was that consent was denied to allow the chairman of the committee to table the report earlier this day. The chairman told me that there was an understanding among members of that committee that each of them would speak to