

Adjournment Debate

the end of this year or early January. While there was never any firm commitment on the part of Mexico to increase the level of deliveries above 50,000 barrels, the president of Mexico indicated last spring that he would consider favourably an expression of interest by Canada in increasing deliveries above the 50,000 barrels a day. Currently the government has under consideration measures to ensure fair and equitable allocation of Mexican crude oil to eastern Canada refineries as this new source of supply becomes available.

Regarding the outlook for supplies to the Atlantic region, there are naturally concerns as to the impact the present Iran-Iraq crisis may have on oil supplies to our country. Latest information available indicates that the war is causing the loss of exports from the two countries to the international market of some three to four million barrels a day. However, Canada has only been receiving about 1.5 per cent of its total oil supplies from these two countries and the Canadian importers involved do not anticipate any major difficulty in making other arrangements to cover this disruption. Furthermore, because of record high oil inventories and weak demand for oil products, the rest of the world appears to be able to absorb the loss of Iran and Iraq exports with relative ease.

● (2220)

Over the longer term, the policy will be to substitute oil in the Atlantic region by domestic energy sources. In this connection, the federal government is planning initiatives which will result in a major substitution of imported oil by other forms of energy. There will be increasing reliance on Nova Scotia coal and an increase in programs designed to use renewable energy sources. Another important source of energy will become available with the delivery of natural gas to the Atlantic market. At the same time, certain conservation programs now implemented will lead to a marked decline in the energy growth rate. We can, therefore, anticipate that increased domestic energy supplies and effective conservation programs will enable Canada, by the end of this decade, to be essentially free of dependence on oil imports from uncertain foreign sources of supply.

CONSUMER AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS—INQUIRY INTO OIL
INDUSTRY—RELEASE OF INFORMATION GATHERED

Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox-Powell River): Mr. Speaker, I would like to raise a question this evening in relation to a question I raised in the House on June 25, 1980, concerning an investigation by the director of research and investigation into an alleged conspiracy to fix prices and to restrain competition in the oil industry.

I would point out that this particular investigation began on February 13, 1973, and some seven and a half years have passed since then. It is interesting that a similar situation occurred in the United States involving the same major oil companies. It was dealt with very quickly and very effectively. In this country the technique to deal with it was obviously to refer it for study to a committee and then allow it to disappear.

Absolutely nothing has been done and we have seen no effective results from this investigation.

The only actual results that have occurred are continued increases in the price of petroleum products to Canadians, and these products are controlled by a virtual monopoly in this country. There has been no movement on the part of the government to do anything about it.

We raised this question on June 25 after raising it on numerous occasions in the House and getting numerous commitments from the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Postmaster General (Mr. Ouellet) that action would be taken or was pending. We may wait for another seven and a half years before that occurs. At one time the minister suggested action would be taken in a matter of weeks. He said it was under consideration by the Minister of Justice. The Department of Justice had received the matter more than a year before that, had fooled around with it and promised action within weeks of the day we asked the question. Nothing has occurred to this date. A few weeks have gone by, the end of the summer has passed and we are now into the fall and a session during which I doubt that anything will be done about this question, this enormous rip-off of Canadians.

There is an additional element of concern. Even if the director of investigations and research made a report, it would go to the minister. Frankly, I submit that the minister in this particular field is a do-nothing minister. Even if it went to the attorney general, in view of the action we have seen on the part of the Department of Justice in Canada on this matter, which has been reprehensible, there would be nothing done. With the reference to the Restrictive Trade Practices Commission we may see another seven and a half years pass while the matter is swallowed up there.

In short, the problem in this country is that the government lacks the will to protect the Canadian people. We need a minister with some determination; we need a government with some determination and we need legislation.

The minister suggested in committee that during this session we would have competition legislation before us which would protect people before the fact rather than after. I suspect that in fact we will not see that competition legislation.

● (2225)

I expect that tonight we will be given a report about how this business has transpired and how, in a few weeks or perhaps in a month or so, we can expect a further report on this subject. It can be referred to the minister, or to the Restrictive Trade Practices Commission or somewhere else for another seven and a half years of consideration. But basically I think the Canadian people have been tremendously short-changed not only on this issue but also on the Campeau-Royal Trust issue, the amalgamation of forest companies in the province of British Columbia, the amalgamation of the print media, the concentration of the cablevision and electronics industries in Canada and the monopolies of the telephone companies. Yet this government sits here doing absolutely nothing.