

have not adhered to—to restore medicare as the best institution at the service of Canadians as a result of efforts by everyone.

The hon. member knows very well that the tool provided to us by a piece of legislation approved by Parliament some time ago is a very heavy-handed one for the situation. The previous government, not the present administration, instituted a commission of inquiry presided over by Mr. Justice Hall. I have informed the House that Mr. Justice Hall has agreed to report in one month with recommendations. We shall make these recommendations public and try to act as soon as possible to restore medicare.

● (1425)

Other than that, the best exchange we could have—which, by the way, would not be and should not be confrontation—would be in this House, through television, to ask the local population and community to react to financial barriers being imposed when they should not be imposed in the light of the huge payments being made by taxpayers in all of Canada for medicare in Alberta, as everywhere else—though not in Saskatchewan, by the way.

Mr. Broadbent: Madam Speaker, the minister is now hiding behind a royal commission.

Some hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. Broadbent: The chorus is at work again. She is hiding behind a royal commission report. Last October, when a Conservative government was in office, she said, and I quote her words, “We should not await the publication of the Hall report before acting.” These are her words, not mine.

Having said last October that we should not wait for the Hall report before acting, why is she waiting now for the Hall report to come in before her government will make further studies and do something about it?

Miss Bégin: For an excellent reason, Madam Speaker. When we were in opposition, the party in power did not send us a telegram with the information pertaining to the commission, how much money it had, what its mandate was, and so on. The hon. member may recall that it was appointed on September 17, 1979. We did not know what the mandate was; nobody knew. Nobody knew the amount of money made available; nobody knew the status of Mr. Justice Hall or the tools at his disposal to conduct a proper inquiry.

I was not in the government, neither was the hon. member. Where was he that day? We stated very clearly that in light of the information in our possession, we did not think that a commission of inquiry was needed. I still feel that way. But a commission exists, and we shall support it in order to get the best possible report.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. David Crombie (Rosedale): A supplementary question to the minister. I tried to follow her answer, but I would be

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pleased if she would repeat it. Let me put it this way: did the minister say that the matter was not public from September 17 on?

[Translation]

Miss Bégin: Madam Speaker, I shall reply in French so as to be absolutely sure the hon. member understands me perfectly. I must be cautious because we are talking about a royal commission of inquiry and the most important matter in Canada.

I want to repeat that when the minister instituted what appeared to be a commission of inquiry on September 17 of last year, if I remember correctly, we from the public did not know under what legislation, what legal or administrative instrument or what authority of Mr. Justice Hall, that was done, and we asked many questions of the government to find out what was really the mandate of the commission. We finally found out that the terms of reference were ten pages long, which does not mean anything, and covered everything under the sun. We eventually found out months later, or at least weeks later, during SOS medicare that Mr. Justice Hall was simply under contract with the minister or the Department of National Health and Welfare, which in no way constituted a royal commission of inquiry.

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[English]

ENERGY

DATE OF NEW OIL-PRICING AGREEMENT

Mr. Harvie Andre (Calgary Centre): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. It follows a question by my hon. friend from Perth.

● (1430)

Given that the minister has admitted that failure to reach a new oil-pricing agreement by July 1 would create a lot of confusion, at best, can the minister assure the House that there will be a new oil-pricing agreement in place by that time?

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): As I have often indicated, I think, in the House, Madam Speaker, there can be no agreement without some form of understanding between at least two parties. I cannot guarantee that parties out of my control will endorse an agreement. All I can say is that I will do my utmost to try to achieve an agreement. I have already had two meetings with each of the ministers of the producing provinces. I have met the ministers of the consuming provinces at least once, except in the case of Quebec, and I expect to meet their representative by the end of this month or in early June. We will therefore pursue our discussions to try to arrive at an agreement.