

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

INITIAL PRICE FOR BARLEY

Mr. Stan Schellenberger (Wetaskiwin): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister who answers for the Canadian Wheat Board in the House. His previous answer causes great difficulty for farmers in western Canada because open market prices are so low. If the initial price is not increased directly, they will find that the profits they should be taking this year will not be there. I hope the Minister will say that he will act quickly in increasing the initial price so that western farmers can finally take advantage of some better markets.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I thought my answer clearly indicated our intention to take the Wheat Board proposal and act upon it with a recommendation to Cabinet as soon as I have had the opportunity to consult with the Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board. I should point out at the same time that the Wheat Board has already extended the quota for feed barley on the export market, which provides a further delivery for farmers in that area. We are already taking action through the Wheat Board to respond to the improved conditions in the world market.

Mr. Schellenberger: It is important that that price increase come quickly.

FARMERS' CASH REQUIREMENTS

Mr. Stan Schellenberger (Wetaskiwin): Madam Speaker, since last year's barley pool is not closed yet, and since there will certainly be losses in that pool, will the Minister assure western farmers that they can in fact assume that the Government will fulfill its obligations under the Canadian Wheat Board Act to cover the loss so that they can get some desperately needed money into their hands from this year's better prices?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, there is no question that the opportunity to improve the financial position of farmers because of improved markets is one to which the Government will respond with a great deal of speed. The methods and techniques of doing it will be based upon the consultations I have and the recommendations we make to Cabinet, but there will be action in that area. I can assure the Hon. Member that it is a matter of extreme and critical importance to us, and that we will respond as soon as we possibly can.

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CONSUMER AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS

TEXACO OIL COMPANY'S INCREASE IN PRICE OF GASOLINE

Hon. Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Consumer and

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Corporate Affairs. It concerns the fact that Texaco, a major oil company, is reputed to be increasing the price for gasoline by between one cent and four cents per litre, or by as much as 18 cents per gallon, in the Ottawa area and throughout the Ottawa Valley. There are indications that other companies will likely follow suit. In fact, that is the history. Is the Minister aware of this? If not, will she make herself aware of it? Also, will she examine the question from the point of view of the Combines Act as to whether there is an offence and, as the protector for consumers, whether this increase is justified, as was done when examinations were made by her in other capacities?

● (1500)

Hon. Judy Erola (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Madam Speaker, I am sure the Hon. Member is aware that such an investigation is under way. Because of the circumstances I am unable to comment, but I can assure the Hon. Member that my Department is keeping a very close watch in this area.

COST TO CONSUMERS

Hon. Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Madam Speaker, I thank the Minister. I have a supplementary question with respect to her position as the protector of consumers. If the increase is justified by the companies because of circumstances with which they satisfy the Minister, will the Minister consider consulting with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to see whether the surplus that exists in the Petroleum Compensation Fund, or the surplus which now exists in the Canadian Ownership Account with the Government, might be used to reduce the cost per litre to consumers of gasoline?

Hon. Judy Erola (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Madam Speaker, of course I accept the Hon. Member's representation, but he is pre-supposing a judgment, and I am not in a position to make that judgment at the moment. Certainly, as the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, I am very concerned about the fluctuation of gasoline prices in this country.

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PETITIONS

TABLING OF REPORTS OF CLERK OF PETITIONS

Madam Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the petitions presented by Hon. Members on Tuesday, September 13, 1983, meet the requirements of the Standing Orders as to form.