

Oral Questions

[English]

NATIONAL REVENUE

DELAY IN REBATE OF TAX ON GASOLINE—GOVERNMENT ACTION TO REDUCE

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask a question of the Minister of Finance. As we are now probably entering a new era of \$1. per gallon for gasoline, will the consumers who are exempt from the excise tax on gasoline, those consumers who are the primary producers of the country, have to wait a whole year for their refunds in light of the fact that they are paying the banks now on producers' costs between 10 per cent and 13 per cent.

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman is perfectly right that the farming community in the production of food is exempt from the excise tax. The refund situation is more particularly a matter for collection and administration of the tax and lies within the jurisdiction of my colleague, the Minister of National Revenue, and he undoubtedly will be impressed by the point of the question.

Mr. Woolliams: Well, Mr. Speaker, surely this is a very important matter in light of the fact that when the producers have to go to the bank to borrow money—and I am referring not only to the farming community but also to other producers throughout Canada—they have to pay between 10 per cent and 13 per cent. In view of the importance of this, surely the minister would find a way to make those refunds to the producers of this country which would enable them to compete with other producers, not only in Canada but throughout the world.

Hon. Ron Basford (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, if I might answer the hon. member's question, we anticipate a system by which where there are large refunds, which is the concern of the hon. member, those refunds could be made on a much shorter basis.

* * *

CONSUMER AFFAIRS

ALLEGED UNFAIR TRADE PRACTICES IN SALE OF GASOLINE—REQUEST FOR REPORT ON GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs arising out of an answer made previously to a question directed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Does the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs share the view just expressed by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources that the federal government has no place in the investigation of unfair trade practices in this country? Would he consider that position and report to the House concerning what his view is in respect of this matter.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Northumberland-Durham.

[Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton).]

FINANCE

REQUEST FOR TABLING OF DEPARTMENTAL ESTIMATES ON WHICH MINISTER BASED ESTIMATE OF REDUCED EXPENDITURES

Mr. Allan Lawrence (Northumberland-Durham): Mr. Speaker, my question is supplementary to one asked earlier of the Minister of Finance. On Monday evening the minister referred to a policy of restraint and the figure of \$830 million was mentioned by him. Apparently at the press briefing prior to the presentation of the budget in the House the figure of \$860 million was mentioned. Later on on Monday evening, on national television, the minister mentioned the figure of \$1 billion. I hope the minister will forgive us for being skeptical, but may we now ask the minister somewhere along the line, preferably before we get into the budget debate, to prove it by tabling in this House the preliminary estimates of each of the agencies and departments of governments on which these figures were based. My question to the minister is, would he undertake to the House, preferably tomorrow, to table, especially in view of the fact that the President of the Treasury Board is not with us and will not be with us, the preliminary statements from each of the departments and agencies of their projected estimates over the next year on which these figures were based.

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I said earlier that the expenditure control lies with my colleague the President of the Treasury Board who will be dealing with this question.

● (1440)

Mr. Lawrence: We are talking about a meaningful budget debate. The minister will not be here. They are his figures. If there are figures will the minister please table them for us within 24 hours, so that we may partake in the debate in a meaningful way? I am referring to those preliminary estimates which were first forwarded to him?

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): My colleague will be participating fully in this debate.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

* * *

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

CHANGE IN UNEMPLOYMENT LEVEL BEYOND WHICH GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBLE FOR FINANCING PROGRAM—REQUEST FOR ESTIMATE OF INCREASE IN PREMIUMS

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Finance. In view of the fact that the government intends to abandon the fixed benchmark of 4 per cent unemployment, at which level it currently bears full responsibility for financing UIC benefits, in favour of a moving eight year average, can the minister give the House his projections of the eight year average level as it will be for 1976, 1977 and 1978?

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): No, Mr. Speaker, but for 1975 it will be 5.3 per cent.