

Oral Questions

the Supreme Court of Canada, and is he willing, today, to guarantee all Canadians the same constitutional rights that are granted the citizens of Quebec and Manitoba and, in particular, those of Ontario and the provinces where we are now a minority threatened with extinction?

Hon. Bill Jarvis (Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I should like to say that ours is not at all a *laissez-faire* policy. I have pursued the work initiated by the former government on the constitution by using the sector approach which includes languages, communications and other topics. The work is progressing. The next conference will be held next month. Language is on the agenda. Our policy is not one of *laissez-faire*. We are trying to make the progress the former government tried to achieve. With regard to Ontario, I have little to say because I do not know what the consequences will be of those court rulings. I recognize that it is an historic decision, the consequences of which will be very important, so I think I should wait till I receive the report of my legal advisers before commenting further.

INQUIRY WHETHER GOVERNMENT RECOGNIZES TWO
FOUNDING PEOPLES AND DISTINGUISHES MULTICULTURAL
GROUPS

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): Mr. Speaker, the major implication of this decision is that we need a national leadership. I would like to know whether that national leadership will come from this government. That is the question I put to the minister. Also, last November 23, again in the absence of the Prime Minister, I asked this government whether they recognized the equality of both founding peoples. The Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport and Multiculturalism answered, and I quote: "We on this side have always realized that this is a bilingual country and a multicultural society." In view of this ambiguous answer by the minister, I would like to ask the Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations whether he can assure the House that the definition of the two founding peoples differs from that of multicultural groups, and that his government recognizes the equality of both founding peoples while respecting the major contribution of multicultural groups?

Hon. Bill Jarvis (Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has put two questions to me. First, the leadership came on May 22. Second, I said, for instance to the Fédération des francophones hors Québec, that there was a difference between the two peoples and other minority groups. As I see it, the Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport and Multiculturalism did not confuse the situation.

[Mr. Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier).]

ENERGY

HOME HEATING FUEL—LACK OF SUPPLY FOR INDEPENDENT
DISTRIBUTORS

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, I want to say at the outset that my colleagues and myself agree entirely with the ruling given today by the Supreme Court of Canada. We must at last recognize the rights of minority groups in all provinces.

• (1425)

[English]

Is the minister aware that Ultramar, a British multinational oil company, has cut off the supply of home heating fuel to at least 50 independent distributors in Ontario and Quebec in recent weeks? If so, what he has done about it?

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, in connection with the supply of independents I took a number of initiatives this summer and fall to increase the supply to them. There is a tight situation. My department does monitor the situation and the cost on an ongoing basis. We are continuing to look at the situation to see whether any sort of assistance can be given. I wrote to all the refiners and terminal operators this past summer, indicating to them that it was this government's policy and issued a directive to the companies that they should treat independents in a fair and equitable manner. The responses that I have had from all the refiners and operators that responded to my telex indicated that they understood this principle and were prepared to comply with it.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, I respectfully suggest to the minister that he check this out, because at a meeting this morning with representatives of independent distributors from the province of Quebec and the province of Ontario I was informed that the cutting-off process is continuing and a number of them are in danger of going completely out of business.

In this context, since these gentlemen brought to my attention their concern about the actions of Ultramar in this respect, and since there have been serious allegations that Ultramar just recently diverted oil supplies intended for Canada and sold the same supplies on the spot market, has the minister investigated that situation and, if so, what can he report to the House?

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member has any specific information with respect to diversion, I wish he would bring it to my attention, with all the details connected with it, so that I could investigate the circumstances that he brings to the attention of the House. If there is any such report, naturally I and my department will follow it up with respect to the kind of information that is obtained. If any diversion has taken place, I will advise the hon. member that it has taken place on the basis of the information I receive. I repeat, if the hon. member has any specific information I wish he would give it to me so I can follow it up.