

Oral Questions

recommended to his Cabinet colleagues to deal forthrightly with this price-gouging at the expense of Canadians?

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of the Environment): Madam Speaker, the study to which the Hon. Member refers is one of a series of studies which are being done under the aegis of Environment Canada. The studies have been proceeding now for something like a year to 18 months. As I say, it is one of a series. We expect that the whole series of studies will be completed sometime very early in the new year. When that takes place, my officials and I will try to bring together the conclusions which will be drawn from all those studies and then find some way of consulting with the public in a discussion of their over-all conclusions and findings.

The Hon. Member asks what action we intend to take. I do not intend simply to impose or provide a series of recommendations without further consultation with interested parties, without further consultation with the public. I believe that consultation should take place on the entire set of studies we are conducting, not simply on the basis of one of them.

REQUEST THAT PETRO-CANADA ROLL BACK PRICE

Mr. Tom McMillan (Hillsborough): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is also directed to the Minister of the Environment. Obviously his officials have drawn their own conclusions about the studies. They are not awaiting any further recommendations or studies by themselves or by anyone else. They have concluded that, without a doubt, there is a price-gouging.

Petro-Canada's prices for unleaded gasoline are apparently, according to the same officials, as exorbitant as those of other oil companies. In light of that fact, will the Government at least instruct its own oil company, Petro-Canada, to roll back the predatory prices it is charging Canadians for unleaded gasoline?

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of the Environment): Madam Speaker, no doubt there are a variety of ways in which this situation can be approached. I would prefer to wait and see the entire base of information that we have as a result of all the studies, before spontaneously acting with one approach in relation to one of them.

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CUSTOMS AND EXCISE

EXCISE TAX PAID BY CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY

Hon. Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Revenue. It concerns the interpretation of the Excise Tax Act which has imposed federal sales tax on the importation and manufacture of publications dealing with the education of the public in the field of cancer, the detection of cancer, and its available cures. This has added a burden of about \$100,000 per year onto the Canadian Cancer Society and its volunteers. The Minister has

listened to his public servants and has refused to reconsider that decision.

In light of that extra burden on the organization, would the Minister again look at the problem to see whether there could be a remission order issued with respect to the matter? Failing that, would the Minister of National Revenue be prepared to recommend to the Minister of Finance an amendment to the statute which would at least exempt the Canadian Cancer Society from that kind of taxation, so that its volunteers will not be burdened with that extra amount of work? Would he undertake to do that, please?

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): Madam Speaker, in his comments the Hon. Member, a former Minister of National Revenue, seemed to be saying that I was blindly obeying—perhaps I am extrapolating somewhat here—my own officials. I would like to inform the Hon. Member that in this particular case, the Minister of National Revenue is complying with an order of Parliament which changed the tariff item for the importation of certain types of publicity material by certain organizations, including the Canadian Cancer Society. After changing the provisions of the Customs Tariff for this particular tariff item, it was necessary to charge sales tax, since, as the Hon. Member will recall, the issue was that imported printed matter should also be subject to sales tax. As Minister of National Revenue, I am applying provisions that were approved by Parliament in 1980, if I remember correctly, and this is a matter of equitable implementation of the Excise Tax Act as passed by this Parliament.

• (1500)

[English]

REQUEST FOR CHANGE IN EXCISE TAX ACT

Hon. Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Madam Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of National Revenue. I asked the Minister to look at the law from the point of view of a remission order. The Minister did not answer that question. I also asked him to consider a change in the law because the volunteers for the Canadian Cancer Society have to collect about an extra \$100,000 a year just to pay the tax on those things.

Will the Minister comply with those two requests, given the fact that, whatever Parliament may have said, it was a mistake in terms of the justice and the equity of the case? Will the Minister make a recommendation to the Minister of Finance for the inclusion, in the next budget, of a change in the Excise Tax Act, on the understanding that that particular change, if it were dealt with on its own, would go through this House very quickly?

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member is saying that Parliament made a mistake in approving this change in the tariff item