

the importation of foodstuffs from abroad that are beyond our control.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Like wheat and puffed rice.

Mr. Abbott: The government is continuing to work toward the preparation of a national food strategy, an effort that I strongly endorse.

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ENERGY

MEASURES TO ESTABLISH NATIONAL CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Mr. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. The increase in gasoline and heating oil prices comes at a time when the annual rate of inflation this year is up to 11.4 per cent. The minister has rationalized the increase in oil and gas prices as a means of encouraging energy conservation and exploration. These price increases are only acceptable if there is an effective conservation and exploration program. In view of the fact that the International Energy Agency has said that our achievements in conservation are below average, may I ask if the minister is now going to create a truly effective national conservation program for energy and if so, how does he plan to do it?

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I have taken a look at what the International Energy Agency had to say about our efforts, particularly in the area of conservation. They have given us a great deal of credit for the initiatives we have taken in energy conservation but they have been critical in one area and that is with respect to our prices. They said that Canada had been holding down prices for too long below international price levels and they strongly urged that Canada should increase its prices. I would say that the view of the majority of ministers yesterday that we should raise our prices in orderly steps, is very much the view of the International Energy Agency.

Mr. Crosbie: Mr. Speaker, a final supplementary question. At the meeting yesterday I believe the minister suggested he is going to do something to expand the energy conservation home insulation program from the provinces of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island to the rest of the country and this would be an effective step. Would the minister tell the House what other effective steps he might take and how does he explain, if he has an effective conservation program, now, that the chief of the office of energy conservation, Mr. David Brooks, resigned on the grounds of a dispute about conservation policy, describing the minister's policies as minimal? How does the minister explain that? This is a man on the scene in Canada and not some international agency.

Oral Questions

Mr. Gillespie: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, Dr. David Brooks has served my department and Canadians extremely well.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: He continues to do so.

Mr. Gillespie: I want to make it quite clear that I wish him well with the work he has chosen to do. In making a change as he has at this time, after a year's sabbatical granted to him a year ago to consider other options and career opportunities and where he would like to place his efforts, he has chosen a path that will undoubtedly be of advantage to Canadians. I wish him very well.

● (1420)

Mr. Crosbie: My question to the minister is this, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Brooks explained that he left the federal government because of a disagreement with the minister's department over conservation and he called the conservation policy minimal. We all wish the gentleman well in his next career, but can the minister answer his statement to the effect that the minister's policy is minimal, and what is the minister going to do about that?

Mr. Gillespie: Mr. Speaker, I think if the hon. member were to check he would find that Dr. David Brooks was misquoted.

EFFECT OF INCREASED PRICE FOR OIL ON COST OF LIVING— GOVERNMENT ACTION

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources regarding the minister's announcement that the price of crude oil will rise \$2 per barrel during the next 12 months. Since federal government studies show that a \$2 per barrel increase will result in a 2 per cent increase in the cost of living, a 1.2 per cent decline in the gross national product and the potential loss of 42,000 jobs, I ask if these facts were taken into consideration when the federal government decided to approve the \$2 per barrel increase? If so, will the minister tell the House if the government has considered that the plight of wage and salary earners in this country, who are restricted under the AIB to a 6 per cent pay increase and who now face an 11 per cent increase in the cost of living, will be further aggravated by the \$2 per barrel increase in the price of oil? What does the government propose to do about the fact that this represents a reduction in the net incomes of millions of Canadian workers in Canada?

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I do not accept the hon. member's figures at all. Frankly, I think there are serious errors in his figures.

Mr. Rodriguez: What are the minister's figures?

Mr. Gillespie: The point which the hon. member, and I hope other Canadians, should recognize is that we would be derelict in our duty if we did not consider the long-term needs of