

Oral Questions

[Translation]

AGREEMENT WITH QUEBEC ON FINANCING OF
CONSTRUCTION OF NUCLEAR PLANT AT GENTILLY

Mr. René Matte (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question of the Minister of Energy.

Can he tell us whether there has been an agreement between the federal government and the province of Quebec regarding the construction of an atomic plant in Gentilly, and how much money the federal government is contributing to this project?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, an agreement to that effect was concluded with Quebec a few months ago. Generally speaking, the federal input in such a project amounts to 50 per cent of capital costs. An atomic plant is already being built in Gentilly.

SUGGESTED SUBSIDY TO QUEBEC AND ATLANTIC PROVINCES
TO PERMIT THEM TO REDUCE TAXES ON GASOLINE AND
HEATING OIL

Mr. Claude Wagner (Saint-Hyacinthe): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the leader of the government.

Has the federal government the intention to grant subsidies of a sort to Quebec or other eastern provinces in order that they can reduce their taxes on gasoline and heating oil and thus dampen the impact of price increases on consumers?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, assistance to those who cannot support themselves in these circumstances because of higher prices for heating oil is a very important matter. The Department of National Health and Welfare has already been in contact with the provinces to determine means that could be taken to help consumers. As to the suggestion that provinces should not change their own tax structure, especially in this period of increased prices when consumers must pay more, I find interesting that the provinces cannot act on their own to alleviate the burden of their own taxpayers without grants from the federal big brother.

[English]

EXISTENCE OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister indicate whether there is now a national emergency in Canada as established by clause 11 of the new allocation of supplies act and, if so, when did that national emergency occur?

An hon. Member: Where were you?

• (1450)

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member is referring to a bill which is before the House, I think the simple answer is that it will be brought on tomorrow for debate. At that time we will have occasion to indicate our position on it, and we hope the opposition will be forthcoming with its own position.

[Mr. Speaker.]

Mr. Baldwin: As a supplementary—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. A number of hon. members are seeking to ask supplementaries on this question. The Chair will recognize the hon. member for Peace River, but I bring to the attention of hon. members that there are just three or four minutes left before the end of the question period.

Mr. Baldwin: If the right hon. gentleman finds it difficult to answer that question I will now ask him this supplementary. In light of the fact that any shortages or disturbances in the market exist, according to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, because of dislocation of supplies outside Canada, can the Prime Minister indicate why the government did not take advantage of the existing import-export law which is now in place and covers petroleum products? Was it because of a feud between the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sure the hon. member will appreciate that a question in those terms is not in order.

JUSTIFICATION FOR GASOLINE PRICE INCREASE—
REQUEST FOR WORKING PAPERS COMPILED BY
DEPARTMENTAL OFFICIALS

Mr. Cyril Symes (Sault Ste. Marie): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources with reference to the justification for the price increases in eastern Canada, with Saturday's increase now amounting to a total of 7 cents per gallon. In the committee on Thursday night I asked the minister if he would table the working papers justifying such an increase and he said he would not because they included confidential information supplied by the oil companies. Is he now prepared to table the working papers compiled independently by members of his staff?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I indicated to the hon. gentleman that traditionally information of this kind supplied by competing firms has not been made public, and since the documents prepared by the government officials would be founded on the same information it seems to me the same principle should apply.

Mr. Symes: Mr. Speaker, it seems strange to me that there is no independent study made by the department. In light of sources of information I have which say that increased costs only justify an increase of 4½ cents per gallon, with the remainder representing a rip-off of the Canadian consumer totalling \$400,000 a day, is the minister prepared to dispute this claim with relevant data from the studies available to him?

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, I am content to dispute it by saying I have relied on the best judgment of my advisers, and I think it is sound judgment.