

nipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) and, I am sure, supported by the Minister of Transport:

That this House nominate the Minister of Transport for the Otto Lang grain delivery award.

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRESENCE IN GALLERY OF MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF UGANDA

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. May I invite members to join with me in signalling the presence in our gallery of a very distinguished visitor in the person of the minister of foreign affairs of Uganda, the Hon. Otema Alimadi.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

FINANCE

THE BUDGET—EFFECT OF OIL PRICE INCREASES AND DISTRIBUTION OF REVENUES THEREFROM

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Finance. Late last Friday, the minister rushed into the House, interrupted the ordinary business under way, and said his budget would be presented December 11. He said he had to proceed, and he could not wait any longer. Yet outside the House he admitted there had not yet been an agreement on oil prices between Ottawa and Alberta or any idea how any higher revenues would be distributed. He said he was going to "make a few assumptions" and forge ahead anyway.

I want to ask the minister how he can present a budget to this House which the House or the country can take seriously, with these vital questions still unanswered and unknown. Is this the type of improved fiscal management he has been pledging to this country?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see that the hon. member is concerned about the budget and wants to ensure that it is going to be as accurate and as good as possible. The hon. member is a bit inconsistent, because for the last number of weeks and months he has been saying that a budget should be brought down immediately. In fact, if I had brought it down on June 6 it would not have been too soon for the hon. gentleman. But now that it is being brought down on December 11, he wants to quibble about it.

● (1415)

The budget will be based on our estimation of what oil prices will be next year, what they should be, and what our proposals are—which may or may not be accepted by that

Oral Questions

time. The budget will indicate what we think should be done about energy prices and offsets. If those assumptions are not met during the next year, then adjustments will have to be made. We must proceed, and we are proceeding, on the basis of what we think is best for Canada and on the basis of what we think will eventually be arrived at, or something close to it.

Mr. Gray: Mr. Speaker, the hon. minister has forgotten that at the time I began, quite properly, calling for a budget, we all assumed that the oil price increase of \$2 a year negotiated by the previous government with the provinces would continue in place.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gray: Is the minister telling us, therefore, that after this House has considered, debated and voted on the budget he will throw it away and bring on another budget in a couple of weeks? Is this consistent with what the minister said in the speech given by his parliamentary secretary on his behalf in Montreal last week about abandoning fine tuning? It looks as though he is doing just the opposite, as in so many other areas.

Mr. Crosbie: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is a veritable paradigm of indignation.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacEachen: Explain, John.

Mr. Crosbie: I will leave it up to the people of Canada as to what they think of the budget and how seriously it deals with the problems of this country. The oil price agreement to which the hon. gentleman has referred was an oil price agreement which the Liberal government then thought would bring us to the world level of prices for oil within a reasonable period of time. Unfortunately, world conditions have not borne out their optimism and we will not reach anywhere near world levels under that agreement. Therefore, a different agreement must be contemplated, particularly in view of this government's energy self-sufficiency policy. The hon. gentleman does not need to worry; it will be a serious budget, seriously delivered.

Mr. Gray: Mr. Speaker, the House and the country are probably glad to hear what the hon. minister has just said, because what he said before was certainly not a paradigm of seriousness and concern. It was just the opposite—a paradigm of fiscal irresponsibility. Does the minister recall that in the speech delivered on his behalf in Montreal last Thursday, he said:

It would be possible for us to take the easy course and to direct policy in a fashion aimed at alleviating the symptoms of our economic difficulties; at relieving the impact on individuals and businesses. I think that course would be irresponsible.

On the following day, the minister's leader said:

—that when there is an increase in energy prices we will be looking at and introducing measures that will help those Canadians, including the elderly—

Who is speaking for the government? Was the minister speaking for the government in Montreal last Thursday, or was it the Prime Minister on Friday?