

Oral Questions

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, with the other forms of energy we have not had the dramatic increase in price due to international events that has occurred with petroleum.

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EMERGENCY MEASURES ORGANIZATION**REDUCTION IN FUNDS—CONSULTATION WITH PROVINCES—SUGGESTED RECONSIDERATION**

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of National Defence concerns the recent declaration in the rather jigsaw defence policy announced by the minister of a reduction in the Emergency Measures Organization which was set up under my administration. Was that done after consultation with the provinces? Why was this cut made in this organization that has brought together people in all parts of the country whose devotion to the public good has been excellent, as shown recently in connection with the floods in New Brunswick and the gas leak in Alberta?

Hon. James Richardson (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, there will be no cut until the next fiscal year and therefore there will be plenty of opportunity for consultation with the provinces.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I am simply asking about what was in the report given by the minister. Is there not to be any cut? Is that the answer? If so, then it is the very reverse of what the minister announced so flagrantly when he said what the new defence policy was going to be. I simply ask this: is it a fact that there will be no reduction?

Mr. Richardson: No, Mr. Speaker. The program I announced envisaged a cut beginning in the next fiscal year in emergency measures payments from the federal government to the provinces, but as I have just indicated we will have plenty of opportunity to discuss that with the provincial governments in the intervening months.

Mr. Diefenbaker: In the intervening months will the minister put an end to this suggestion which has no justification whatsoever?

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COMBINES**INQUIRY AS TO COMPLETION OF INQUIRY INTO OIL INDUSTRY AND PRICE OF GASOLINE**

Mr. Allan Lawrence (Northumberland-Durham): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. Can the minister inform the House when the inquiry will be completed by the Combines Branch into the oil industry and particularly the pricing of gasoline in this country?

Hon. Herb Gray (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I will be happy to check with the acting director and see what information I can give the hon. member.

[Mr. Ritchie.]

Mr. Lawrence: In view of the urgency of the matter and in view of the fact that on February 15 the minister assured the House that it had top priority, can the minister not do better than that and can he also assure the House that the public will be informed of the contents of the report when it is made?

Mr. Gray: Mr. Speaker, it is the practice of the Combines Branch to inform the public of the results of their investigation either through the director's annual report or action in the courts. With respect to the first part of the question, the director, an official with a high degree of autonomy, is aware of the interest of the House and the public in completing this inquiry at the earliest possible date. I will ensure that he continues to be aware of this interest.

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CONSUMER AFFAIRS**PASSING ON OF BENEFITS OF CORPORATE TAX AND CAPITAL COST ALLOWANCE REDUCTIONS TO CONSUMERS—RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE TO MANUFACTURERS**

Mr. Max Saltsman (Waterloo-Cambridge): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. In view of the assurance given by the minister that the benefits from corporate tax reductions and capital cost reductions would be passed on to consumers in the form of lower prices, is the minister now in a position to provide that evidence to the House from the results of the questionnaire he sent to manufacturers?

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the questionnaire has not been completed but it is furnishing the information that will form the substance of the report which I gave an undertaking to the House to table before the end of March.

Mr. Saltsman: May I ask the minister whether the information that will be provided by the questionnaire will distinguish between capital cost allowances and corporate tax reductions? Also, can the minister tell the House whether the information was requested on a voluntary or compulsory basis and whether the information that is to be provided was under the condition of truth as outlined in the Statistics Act?

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, the questionnaire was prepared by Statistics Canada and of course is being requested on a voluntary basis. There is nothing in the law to compel a reply. I am assured, however, that the questionnaires will constitute a very valid survey of the effects of these corporate tax reductions.

Some hon. Members: Rubbish!