

Board. No doubt Senator de Cotret, by way of an answer to this question—which is not quite phrased as a question—will help us understand the difference.

I would like to ask him what is meant by the government in the phrase “encourage a significant reduction in Canada’s overall energy consumption”. This phrase appears in the Speech from the Throne and it seems to threaten a really difficult economic period being introduced in Canada. I would like to ask whether the government means to tell industry and consumers in this country that there must be a reduction in overall energy consumption; and, if that is what is meant, whether the minister has done a study of the impact on the various Canadian industrial sectors with respect to the cost of such an energy reduction; and, finally, what is meant by the word “significant”. That is a word that this house has debated in other contexts. Does it mean 5 per cent, 10 per cent, 20 per cent? What are you asking Canadians to do when you ask them to reduce their overall energy consumption?

Senator de Cotret: Honourable senators, if I might address the question as to the exact wording in the Speech from the Throne on encouraging conservation, I would like to mention to honourable senators once again a fact I am sure they are well acquainted with, and that is that we in Canada are the highest per capita consumers of energy anywhere in the world, and when we talk about conservation, certainly in an energy-short world, if we are ever going to achieve our goal of energy self-sufficiency, we have to place some emphasis on and attach some importance to the need for a nation such as ours to conserve energy. That will come as no surprise. We have had programs in the past, that the previous government introduced, with that very idea in mind, so that as much energy as possible might be conserved. I have in mind the insulation program, among others.

In putting together the new energy policy which the Minister of Energy will announce shortly, we are attaching significance to the conservation of energy. Keeping in mind, once again, that we are the highest consumers of energy per capita in the world, conservation has to be as much a part of an energy strategy in this country as the enhancement of supply, and that, I think, is what the Speech from the Throne referred to.

In terms of specific conservation goals, I am afraid I will have to ask the Minister of Energy to give me an indication if there is a specific target to be met and by what time.

Senator Austin: May I just draw the honourable senator’s attention to the difference between encouraging a significant reduction in Canada’s overall energy consumption and encouraging a reduction in the rate of growth of Canada’s energy consumption? I believe the former could very seriously dislocate Canadian industry.

As for the question you would like me to ask, may I ask the minister whether there is any intention on the part of this government to introduce any amendments to the Petroleum Administration Act and the amendments which were made to it by the previous government, to reduce in any way the powers

[Senator Austin.]

which the federal government retains under that act to set the price of oil and natural gas in Canada?

Senator de Cotret: I will take that question under notice and I will give an answer to it as soon as I possibly can.

Senator Hays: Mr. Minister, is the government planning any rationing so far as conservation is concerned?

Senator de Cotret: The answer to that question is no.

THE CABINET

MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THE SENATE

Senator Everett: Honourable senators, I believe the Leader of the Government in the Senate has just indicated that questions that are not within the ambit of responsibility of the three ministers here can be asked of them and they will check with the appropriate minister in the other place as to the answer. I think it is important, then, that we know exactly what the responsibilities of the ministers who sit in this chamber are. In respect to Senator de Cotret, I think I understand what is meant by his responsibilities as Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, but I wonder if he could delineate for this chamber what his responsibilities are as Minister of State for Economic Development.

Senator de Cotret: Honourable senators, I would be very happy to say a few words on that topic while reserving the opportunity to give a somewhat fuller description in writing of the responsibilities of the Minister of State for Economic Development.

Essentially, the Minister of State for Economic Development plays a co-ordinating role between the line economic departments of government. That co-ordinating role is played through a cabinet committee on economic development. The Ministry of State for Economic Development acts as a substantive secretariat to the cabinet committee, and is available to all the ministers who sit on that cabinet committee.

An honourable senator mentioned that the Minister of Finance and the President of the Treasury Board also sit on that committee, and they do. But they do not sit on that committee as do the line departments; they sit on all policy committees as *ex officio* members. In other words, it is not the responsibility of the cabinet committee on economic development to deal with matters, for example, that would be contained in the budget, nor is it the responsibility of the cabinet committee on economic development to deal with matters directly related to the Treasury Board. So the President of the Treasury Board and the Minister of Finance sit on the cabinet committee on economic development and all other policy committees of cabinet.

The departments that do report directly to the cabinet committee on economic development are the line departments of government that have an economic mission in life, and the role of the chairman of that committee is one of co-ordination within the new system of expenditure management that we as a government have put in place over the last few months.