

That is the kind of double talk that people in the Atlantic provinces hate to hear, because they discover that the government at times is not really serious about the energy problems facing the country and that people will be saddled with the same problems next year and the year after which they are saddled with now because of lethargy toward and disinterest in Atlantic Canada, of which we accuse the government so often. Only if we get the country on the rails and get the energy problems on the way to a solution can we hope to overcome the problems we face today. I hope that this debate will help to spur the government on to produce some of the resources in our country so we will know tomorrow that things are a hell of a lot better than they are today.

Mr. Peters: May I call it six o'clock?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed that we call it six o'clock?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It being six o'clock I do now leave the chair until 8 p.m. tonight.

At six o'clock the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Madam Speaker, I believe this is one of the better debates we have had on opposition days, and I think the House owes a great deal of thanks to the hon. member for Don Valley (Mr. Gillies) for having introduced the subject. I am not too impressed with government representatives who have indicated that the government has done a considerable amount in the field of conservation. That does not appear to be the fact. It is generally understood by most people who have studied the problem of energy that if conservation is not embarked upon we may be in serious difficulty.

I had the opportunity earlier this afternoon of talking to two gentlemen from the city of London who indicated that things were pretty dull in here and that this is a pretty dull debate. That was their impression, and I think it is the impression of this country as well. They asked me what the debate was about; I explained it to them, and they said there should be more interest in this subject. However, they listened for some while and did not find the subject to be of interest.

The fact is that we in this House are not sure whether there is a shortage of petroleum and fossil fuels as an energy source. A few years ago companies were indicating that we would have gas and oil for the next 100 or 200 years, and that there were large reserves, particularly gas reserves. Yet very shortly after that those same companies indicated that a shortage had developed in Canada, and that a shortage was developing around the world. No matter what we in this House think about it, the general public in Canada does not believe there is an energy shortage. Canadians believe that they have been hoodwinked by the oil companies and that the oil companies

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have decided to take it easy with regard to producing fossil fuel for our energy requirements because they believe "the seven sisters" have time to wait and, if they wait, they will receive a bigger return on their investment.

I wonder, and I am sure other members wonder, if we in this House really have the ability to ascertain whether there is a shortage of fuel and if there is, what the timetable may be and what we can do about it. Every time I read a report of the Energy Board I find that it is not the report of the Energy Board—it is the suggestions made by the oil companies which tell the board what our potential is, what our long term and short term forecasts may be. The Energy Board does not seem to have the ability to look at those figures and ascertain whether they are correct or just ballpark figures. For that reason the general public in Canada does not believe there is an energy shortage. As long as the public does not believe there is an energy shortage it will not take the subject very seriously. The government does not take it very seriously either. It has established an energy conservation board, but last year the budget provided it with only \$1,300,000. Most of that money went into advertising.

We heard the minister make such silly statements as, "Pull down the blinds to keep the house warm; put on a sweater; and drive your automobile at a slower speed." If there really is an energy shortage then some of the things which have been suggested today should be given top priority. I am not sure there is a shortage, but if there is, and if we do not do anything about conservation on a long term basis are we not fiddling while Rome burns? Are we not being irresponsible by not ascertaining for ourselves whether there is in fact an energy shortage or whether we are being hoodwinked by the energy experts. Who in this country are the big seven oil companies?

I listened with a great deal of attention and interest to the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton) outline some of the alternative sources of energy we should be investigating, and it almost sounded like Buck Rogers in a Science fiction novel. Those other sources of energy have been investigated and developed to a considerable degree.

I am sure that without much effort most of the people in this country could find for themselves an alternative source of energy which would allow them to conserve probably 50 per cent of the energy they are now consuming. If people will do this, then it behooves corporations like Ontario Hydro to get off the boob tube, to start conserving, and to provide methods of conservation rather than advertising the use of more energy for this reason or that.

All energy suppliers are advertising. Every day oil companies are advertising their wares, competing with other companies which supply exactly the same grade of oil or gasoline. They are still being allowed to expand very rapidly the number of outlets each company has, rather than making a decision that one community will be served by one company and another community served by another company. There is no need for duplication. In effect, much of the capital costs they have been putting into real estate in the last ten years could be brought to an end, with resultant savings.