

Energy Conservation

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): What has the government actually done? On February 6, the minister announced a program which was to cost \$1.3 million. In the estimates for this year, for the energy conservation office there was half a million dollars, and now the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has brought in a supplementary estimate for \$2,350,000. The initial vote and practically all of the present vote will be used, in the main, for advertising with respect to education, the minister says, among youth, industry and transportation systems; but there have been no effective steps and no co-ordination by the various departments of government in order to bring about conservation of energy.

What the government has failed to realize is that over the years our whole economy has been built on the concept that we can waste our energy resources because we have unlimited quantities on hand. Our economy has been geared to the idea that our consumption should go up annually. For instance, because of the high price of housing in the cities, we have pushed people out into suburban areas and even out into the country, so that they need gasoline to drive to work. The automobile industry has worked on the principle that there is more profit on large cars than small cars and have resisted public pressure for smaller cars. The building codes have been completely unconcerned about saving energy and putting in proper insulation and energy-saving devices. Urban transportation repeatedly has been set aside on the ground that it is really for the poor and the disadvantaged, everybody else should drive a car, and the bigger the car and the more energy consumed, the better.

I do not think we can procrastinate on this question any longer. I think the time has come for the government to use its very considerable powers in a number of areas in order to conserve energy in this country. I want to suggest three areas in which action has to be taken. The first is in the field of transportation, because this is one of the major consumers of energy. There has to be a move toward smaller cars; there have to be means by which the large, heavy gasoline-consuming vehicle becomes less attractive. The government has put a 5 per cent excise tax on larger cars. That will have to be substantially increased. They will have to do much more. As long as large cars give the automobile industry a bigger profit than small cars, they will be produced.

The government could help very considerably in this field by putting in tax disincentives for the automobile industry to make large cars, and tax incentives for them to make small cars. But they are doing nothing like that. The energy conservation office is powerless. According to the press, the director of that office, Mr. David Brooks, wanted to put an energy efficiency tag on all cars in the dealers' showrooms. Such a tag would have shown the amount of gasoline consumed per mile, or the number of miles per gallon of gasoline which could be obtained from that car. The prospective purchaser would then have had some idea whether the car he or she was purchasing was the one that would give more miles to the gallon. Press reports say that the government turned down that proposal. Even that very simple proposal was rejected.

As the hon. member for Don Valley pointed out, the government made an appeal to the provinces to lower the

speed limit to 55 miles an hour. British Columbia acceded to the request immediately. This has not only helped with respect to the consumption of gas, but it has helped to reduce accidents in that province. How much pressure was put on the provincial governments? What attempt was made to bring provincial representatives together last February or March to lower the speed limit? Nothing at all. The only people who have benefited from the government's energy conservation program to date are the advertising agencies.

The second field I want to look at is the matter of space heating. Fuel for heating buildings, factories and individual homes accounts for 35 per cent of our oil consumption in this country. One of the first things the government should have done—and ought to do now—was put in the national building code standards which require insulation and proper energy-saving devices. Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation requires that if the houses built under its assistance programs are electrically heated, they must have very high standards of insulation. Those standards should be applied to all houses in which Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation has any equity. This ought to be in the national building code. According to CMHC, the additional cost for a three-bedroom house is anywhere from \$200 to \$400. The householder would save that amount in fuel costs in the first year or so. The government has done nothing at all about building codes. We merely say to the construction industry that they should take whatever steps are necessary to insulate houses and conserve fuel, but we are still building shells; we are still putting up houses in which there is a tremendous waste of fuel.

The government ought to do something about prestige lighting. The lighting of office buildings and keeping them lit all night is an advertising gimmick. Driving home from the parliament buildings at night I notice that every high-rise office building in central Ottawa is lit to the roof at almost midnight. The government's conduct is no better. I see the National Defence building with every office lit. I see the Lester B. Pearson building lit from top to bottom. I recognize that there may be people in these buildings who have to work at night, but the whole of the buildings do not need to be lit.

Neon signs are another example; they are left burning all night. The government says it has no power to deal with that, but they could rule that this type of lighting constitutes advertising, and if they were to set a percentage on the cost of advertising and say that beyond that figure advertising would not be deductible for income tax purposes, it would very quickly cut down the amount of unnecessary lighting of buildings at night and the unnecessary neon lights that are left burning all through the night.

If the government wanted to set an example to the people of this country, I suggest they could ground the executive jets which ministers use for flying around the country telling people how to save energy. The former minister of energy, mines and resources said, as reported on page 2988 of *Hansard* for February 6, 1975: