

borrowers pay the 1 per cent fee because, during our negotiations and the consultations that I had throughout the country, the borrowers asked us to make the legislation more flexible and easily accessible to small businesses so that the banks would be attracted by these loans.

We therefore gave this possibility to small businesses. We gave the bankers the opportunity to pass on the 1 per cent fees to their customers, but they are under no obligation to do so. However, they can if they want to.

In return, the banks have promised to promote the small businesses loans program. They have assured us that they will provide information on the program. They have guaranteed that they will do everything to help small businesses to remain in business. We shall develop, with the Canadian bankers, a small business information system because of which there will probably be fewer bankruptcies in the future, which I believe to be extremely important.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I would like to thank all my colleagues in this House who have given prompt and serious consideration to this Bill and I believe that Bill C-23 will be one of the best tools available to small businesses in the years to come and that they will use it a lot.

Mr. Gauthier: I shall be brief, Mr. Speaker. I wish to make two points, the first of which is that we, members of the Liberal Party, are the only ones to oppose this legislation. I want the Minister to know that we do not mind being alone in that, because this bill is regressive any way.

It is a step backward. These new provisions will not serve as incentives but as deterrents. Because we favour progress, we will not support regressive measures such as this one.

To the second question, it was stated that the average loan amounted to \$28,000. Anyone who is familiar with statistical data is aware that an average loan of \$28,000 means absolutely nothing, Mr. Speaker. There have been many loans of a couple of thousand dollars each, some loans may have involved higher amounts and the average was \$28,000. The point I want to make is that in this era of high technologies, the government should make it possible for people to borrow more than \$100,000 to upgrade their operation, purchase new equipment, build new facilities or purchase additional land. The only thing I am concerned about is that they will have the power to do so not with the consent of the House and through amending provisions, but through the Estimates, for so-called reasons of expediency. I suggest that using the Estimates instead of coming to the House and amending the legislation through the normal process will not save that much time. I find the argument which you have put forward rather weak. I feel that if the government wished to amend the legislation, it should come to us. If the new provisions were likely to improve the legislation, they would receive our full support; if, on the other hand, they were regressive in nature, they certainly would not get our support.

Oil Substitution Act

• (1150)

[English]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion please say yea.

Some Hon. Members: Yea.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those opposed to the motion please say nay.

Some Hon. Members: Nay.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In my opinion, the yeas have it.

Mr. Gauthier: On division.

Motion agreed to and Bill read the third time and passed.

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OIL SUBSTITUTION AND CONSERVATION ACT CANADIAN HOME INSULATION PROGRAM ACT

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed from Thursday, March 21, consideration of the motion of Mr. Wise (for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources) that Bill C-24, an Act to amend the Oil Substitution and Conservation Act and the Canadian Home Insulation Program Act, be now read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on National Resources and Public Works; and the motion of Mr. Hockin (P. 3227).

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, at the end of the debate last Thursday when this matter was before the House, I was speaking to the motion of the Government to close debate on second reading of Bill C-24. At that time I asked the Government if it would reconsider the March 31 deadline for COSP.

Government Members have received inquiries about extending the program. I have requested an extension of six months. The NDP put forward a motion to extend the program for six months. The Government has received requests indicating varying lengths of time, but for the most part the groups who contacted us request a six-month extension because they feel that period of time would be adequate to service the number of applications to go off oil and on to another form of energy.

Primarily in the Province of Ontario applications are for going off oil and on the natural gas or electricity. In Atlantic Canada, in the Province of Nova Scotia, we do not have the