

To be fair, I must point out that the government did some things of a marginal nature in conservation, such as the removal of the sales tax on some energy users, such as motorboats. Even there, a great debate ensued as to exactly when they did take off that tax. This also applied to snowmobiles and a few things of that sort, but they were very marginal things which could only affect the periphery of the use of energy. They also established an office on energy conservation. Since it has been established hardly anyone has been made aware of what it does.

What should the government do? A great many things could have been done. We could have changed the tax structure on automobiles, making it attractive for people to use more efficient cars. The Ford Foundation in New York has published a report which says that any country that is serious about energy conservation should require that by the year 1980 all cars sold should operate for at least 20 miles per gallon of gasoline. This government has taken no action along this line. It has taken no action on speed limits. Over a year ago the United States government went in the direction of reducing speed limits. Now we find the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Gillespie) planning to meet the provincial premiers on December 12 to discuss the whole question of reducing speed limits—two years too late.

Has the government been making a great thrust to try to get urban transportation built in this country in an effective fashion? No, it has not. Has the government used any imagination in developing tax policies to encourage car pools? Not a thing has been done in that direction. Has there been any tax program or any other sort of program to increase shipment by rail? No, there has not. In the use of energy for transportation the government has no program for conservation of energy—none whatsoever. What has the government done about energy conservation in the area of housing? It recently introduced a major program to stimulate residential construction, but is there anything in that program for energy conservation? No, not a thing. Has the government given any particular advantage to the people who use more insulation in their houses? No, it has not. You would think that the Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Danson) had never heard—he probably never has—that there may be a need to conserve energy in this country. Was there anything in that program to give advantages to those building houses with solar energy plants? No, not a thing.

So nothing has been done for conservation in transportation or in residential construction. In terms of industrial use, nothing has been done to encourage energy conservation. All that can be concluded is that the government really does not take this matter seriously and does not really believe that energy conservation is an important matter so far as this country is concerned, in spite of the fact that we have a far greater relative increase in energy consumption than any other country in the world.

It is argued, and may well be argued by the government, that the only effective way to conserve energy is to let prices rise. As a matter of fact, the former minister of finance has argued from time to time that it is important for the price of energy to rise so that there will be some type of conservation brought about. I have waited a long time to hear the Minister of Finance (Mr. Macdonald) or

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the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Gillespie) release to parliament some studies to suggest what sort of conservation would come about with a rise in prices. Of course, none has come forward.

The fact of the matter is that most studies which have been done seem to indicate that higher prices do not change energy consumption much. There are changes in consumption when total levels of economic activity change, but by themselves prices do not change energy consumption a great deal. We in this party have argued and supported the idea that care must be exercised in the way in which price changes are made, given the fact that such rises in price have different impacts in different regions and people with different income levels. But the fact still remains that the important thing is not a rise in the price of energy per se for the sake of conservation but, rather, pricing that ensures that the people who are producing energy, the explorers and developers, have a sufficient rate of return so that they continue to find energy needed for this country. One of the tragic things that happened in the last couple of years was the decision of the government to use energy as a foundation for tax revenue, rather than how to produce the energy which we will need in this nation in the years ahead.

We have reached the incredible situation of a country which should be self-sufficient in energy, particularly in fossil fuels, facing the possibility of finding itself short and having to import the energy it needs in the years ahead. We are at a period when we are profligate in our use of energy resources, we have no program to increase our supply, and we have never considered the problem of conserving what we have in an effective fashion. We are not even looking seriously at alternative sources of energy in this country. As I mentioned earlier, the total amount we are spending on energy research and development in this country is about \$1.2 million, and we are spending it in seven departments. The natural result is that no effective work whatsoever is being done.

● (1520)

My colleague, the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton) will be speaking on alternative energy sources as this debate goes ahead, but I want to stress that the task force on energy research and development has said, and made clear, that research and development of energy conservation methods has been neglected in Canada, yet research and development should form a significant component of any energy conservation program. The task force says very firmly that the government should be spending about \$10 million per year on research into ways in which to conserve energy. We are spending about \$1.2 million.

Does it make any difference whether we have an energy conservation program or whether we do anything about conserving energy in the course of the next few years? Of course it does. In the first place, we could run out of our energy. It is incredible to think that this government is so unconcerned about its commitment to future generations that it would allow even the possibility that Canada would run out of energy resources, or that we would permit, because of profligate use now, a shortfall of energy for generations in the future.