

the legislation before the House is important and deserves serious consideration.

The purpose of Bill C-24, an Act to amend the Oil Substitution and Conservation Act and the Canadian Home Insulation Program Act, is to cut back on these programs and to move up the date on which the programs are terminated, therefore limiting the number of Canadians who can benefit from these programs.

In that context this legislation is a part of the cuts announced by the Government last November 8. It is part of the Government's over-all strategy of cuts in government spending. This strategy of cutting public spending is quite contrary to what the Conservatives said in the election campaign. I am reminded of the words of one of the leading Members of the Conservative Party whom I cannot mention by name in this Chamber, but I am sure the Member will know to whom I refer. To paraphrase the Member's words, he said something to the effect that "if we told you before the election what we were going to do when in office, you just would not vote for us". That is a paraphrase.

Mr. Althouse: Is that the Hon. Member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie)?

Mr. Keeper: I would have to ask the Speaker's direction as to whether I could name a particular Member. I am sure the Member knows who he is.

Mr. McDermid: Give him some credit then.

Mr. Keeper: I will not say whether it is the Hon. Member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie); I cannot say who it is.

Mr. McDermid: How do you know it is an accurate quote then?

Mr. Keeper: The Conservative Member who said that is not to be condemned for having said what he said because it was a display of honesty.

Mr. McDermid: Give us a hint. Is he in the House today?

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Keeper: Certainly the Member is within earshot.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Keeper: The Member is to be congratulated for his honesty and for his forthrightness in having said what he said.

Mrs. Sparrow: We are all honest.

Mr. Keeper: Unfortunately, that was not true of the Conservative campaign. In the campaign the Conservatives promised that they would not cut useful programs nor would they cut into worth-while public expenditures, but they would cut out waste in government spending. They said they would balance the books of the federal Government by cutting out unnecessary public expense. That is what was said during the election campaign. I think the Bill before us today needs to be

examined in that light. Does it meet the criteria set out by the Conservative Party during the election campaign when the Conservatives said that they would reduce the deficit by cutting out wasteful public spending?

The Canadian Oil Substitution and Conservation Program is a program that provides an incentive for people to change the heating system of their homes from oil to gas or to something else. The program has been effective. It has resulted in a large number of people converting their heating system from oil to gas. This program helped not only individuals who took up the challenge and responded to the incentive to substitute or move away from oil to something else, but it helped in the conservation of a non-renewable resource. Once oil reserves have gone, there is no way to replace them. Once a barrel is empty, there is no tap to turn on to fill it up again.

I consider COSP to be a worth-while use of public money. It is an incentive for people to have their homes heated in a way that will cost them less and an incentive to preserve and conserve a non-renewable resource. I would challenge any Member of the Government to stand up in the House and justify the cutting back of this program in terms of which the Government spoke in the election. I challenge any Member of the Government to stand up now and say that this program is a waste of public money.

I consider this a very useful program. I welcome some response on this point from the Government side. It would be refreshing to see some of these Government Members on their feet contributing their thoughts in this debate. I would like to hear them say why they feel this program that gives grants to citizens to convert from oil heating to gas is a waste of public money. If any Member on that side takes up the challenge, and I am sure there is some brave soul across the way, I would also like them to explain—

Mr. McDermid: There are 211 of us.

Mr. Keeper: A pretty silent 211. I would like to hear them explain how they can reject a program based on incentives. I would have thought the notion of incentives was fundamental to Conservative philosophy. From the speeches I have heard Conservatives make, incentive is a sacred mechanism for stimulating action in the economy. Both COSP and CHIP are incentive programs. They are meant to stimulate activity in the private sector, which happens as a result. These programs have been successful in stimulating activity in the insulation of homes and the conversion of homes from oil to gas heating. The actual conversion and insulation work takes place through the private sector. It is an important economic activity and it is based on the principle of incentive.

I would like to hear somebody from the Government side of the House tell us why he or she is rejecting the mechanism of incentive for promoting economic activity and conservation. Why do the Conservatives characterize the use of public dollars as incentives as a waste? I would like some explanation on that.

This cut-back in the Canadian Oil Substitution Program and Canadian Home Insulation Program is part of the general