

Oil Substitution Act

Atomic Energy of Canada to do the research these commercial companies are not able to afford. I would like to put on the record today, Mr. Speaker, that a far too narrow approach has been taken toward nuclear energy in Canada by my hon. friend. If he is sincerely interested in the high-tech industry in this country, he should really get some briefings on its broader scope.

The National Research Council started what is today Atomic Energy of Canada Limited. I agree with the Hon. Member that the NRC has been badly chopped by the present Government. However, in no way should we downplay one of the greatest success stories in nuclear energy in this country, and it does have a lot to do with the environment as well. Candu reactors are safe. That has been proven by the so-called incident at Pickering. They are capable of improvement and any errors can be corrected. We have the expertise and the technique to do it and it was indeed done at Pickering.

Let us not be negative about our successes in high technology in this country, and the safety factors which are built in, and at the same time complain about the expenditures and lack of energy generally in this country, because this country would not be what it is today in industrial development if we did not have that back-up source of nuclear energy in Canada.

Mr. de Jong: Mr. Speaker, I would first like to say that I made the nuclear comparison in terms of refuting what the Minister of State for Science and Technology (Mr. Siddon) said in front of the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates. He said, and I quote:

In many cases, after some 10 years of funding, it has become evident that, particularly in the areas of solar and wind energy, the return on that investment was not evident.

I was pointing out, Mr. Speaker, that the Government was willing to forgo any further research and development into solar and wind energy because, according to the Minister, there was no return on investment in a ten-year period. Yet Governments, both past and present, are not willing to use the same measurement on nuclear energy. Research and development on nuclear energy has been going on for much longer than ten years. In fact, 30 years is more accurate.

The second point I would like to make to the Hon. Member is in terms of cost effectiveness. Nuclear energy has certainly proven to be a very expensive technology. It is not cost-effective at all. We have white elephants both in Canada and in the United States which are costing hundreds of millions of dollars. We have a nuclear power plant in the Maritimes and I am sure the people who initiated that program wish they had never gotten involved. We have a plant producing heavy water that nobody wants and nobody needs, at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars. The Hon. Member says that nuclear technology is a safe technology. Why, then, did the previous Government and this Government refuse to allow an open inquiry into the industry?

● (1230)

Time and again, Mr. Speaker, we hear stories of breakdowns in nuclear reactors. Finally last week we read some of

the minutes of the Atomic Energy Control Board obtained by the Ottawa *Citizen* through the freedom of information legislation. The minutes reveal some of the horror stories which have occurred behind closed doors.

No, nuclear power is not safe. We do not have all the technology in place. We have not discovered a way to deal with its wastes. It is not economic, especially when compared to conservation programs. It just has not made sense, it has not added up, yet the Government continues to pour money down that hole while at the same time cutting off the nickels and dimes that were spent on conservation. I do not understand the economics and I do not think the people of Canada understand.

Mr. Hopkins: Mr. Speaker, that pretty well lays the NDP policy on the line. It will be interesting to see what the union leaders in the nuclear industry think of that statement.

As far as cost effectiveness is concerned, would the Hon. Member not admit that any useful in-depth research into energy is indeed expensive in the beginning? The NDP is always talking about commitments. Well, if you are going to start a long-term research development program like atomic energy, you have to make a long-term commitment. I will tell the Hon. Member that the long-term benefits of nuclear energy in this country in the future will far outweigh the costs which have initially gone into research and development.

I am amazed at the NDP. Some of them are more conservative than the Conservatives because they fail to move ahead and are always bringing these tactics of fear out in front of the public. They are trying to win their case through irrational and emotional arguments rather than by logic. Anyone in this House who does not think we need nuclear energy in the future is being very short-sighted about the future development of this nation of ours.

Mr. de Jong: I note that both Conservative and Liberal Members applaud that statement. It is that type of thinking that scares me and I think the majority of the Canadian people. Utility company after utility company in the United States is on the brink of bankruptcy because of their investment in nuclear energy. Stating that this is the most cost-effective way to go is an invitation to Canada to follow down that road and over the precipice. It is as though we cannot learn from the American companies which are going bankrupt because of the tremendous cost overruns and the inadequacy of the technology. They want us to follow them like lemmings. It appears that only the NDP is saying that we are not that stupid.

Mr. Lewis: I have a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I rise to bring to the attention of the House that the Hon. Member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mr. Waddell), who usually has his foot in his mouth, has it on his desk.

Mr. Waddell: Mr. Speaker, I have both feet on the floor as usual, while I listen to one of the best speeches I have heard in