

\$11.8 billion to build the nuclear reactor at Darlington and they will have to pay \$4.8 billion in interest charges. Who benefits? Of course, the banks, because they will collect the \$4.8 billion in interest charges. It just does not make sense.

I am concerned that the Conservative Government is following the path of exploiting home owners and helping oil companies and banks rather than ordinary Canadians at home. One would tend to think that Conservatives are concerned about conservation. They are not concerned about conservation. Certainly Bill C-24 points out that fact. It does not make sense. It will not reduce the deficit. In fact, it will increase the deficit because the amount of money which the Government will have to spend to bring in new supplies of oil and energy will be much more costly than it would be to follow the conservation route.

The other matter which dismays me is the Government's destruction of alternative energy programs. Canada has begun to develop a leadership role in developing new technologies. Government spokesmen have said that the private sector will now have to take over, that the Government can no longer support alternate energy programs in wind, biomass and so forth. When the Minister of State for Science and Technology (Mr. Siddon) appeared before the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates, he stated that ten years was a long enough period and that since the new technologies had not proven themselves in that ten-year period, it was therefore the Government's decision to cut further research in alternate energy programs.

The Minister, who is an engineer, should know better. First, it is incorrect to say that those programs have not proven themselves. A fair number of those programs are on the brink of becoming commercially viable. Several are past the point and have become economically viable. If a ten-year span is what the Minister demands, I wish he would use the same measurement for nuclear energy. It took 30 years of experimentation, Mr. Speaker, before the first reactor was ever put onstream. We are willing to spend billions of dollars in researching nuclear energy, yet we are not willing to spend 10 years doing the research on alternate energies, on small-scale energy projects which allow the self-sufficiency of individual consumers and smaller communities. The commitment is to the megaproject which is costing hundreds of billions of dollars, not to the small-scale projects which produce more jobs, which are more efficient and more environmentally sound. These projects get scrapped while the high cost projects get supported by this Government and, I should say, by the former Liberal Government as well.

● (1220)

The Liberals were the ones who poured the billions of dollars into the National Energy Program. I will give them credit, Mr. Speaker, for supporting the alternate energy and conservation programs, but in terms of the total scheme of things, these were considered as minor projects compared to the megaprojects.

Oil Substitution Act

It dismays us in the New Democratic Party that the Government has chosen this route. It flies against the philosophy, surely, of many of the Hon. Members opposite who are Conservatives in the small "c" sense and who believe we have to move into a society where we can begin to conserve and husband our resources. The Government is destroying that philosophy with Bill C-24.

There is considered to be an oil glut in the world today. The demand for that product today is not as high, compared to its supply. There is no scarcity at present. People are not lining up at the pumps. But common sense tells us that this is only a temporary situation. Oil is a finite resource which eventually will run dry. We must put in place alternate energy sources. Or are we going to lay back and wait until the crisis is upon us again before we begin to act? Surely a forward-looking Government must realize that the day will come again when oil energy will be in great demand. We have the time right now to prepare for that day.

What this Government has done in Bill C-24, and in the cut-backs to research and development in alternate energy, is to prevent us from being prepared for that inevitable day when again oil will be a scarce commodity and will carry a high price tag. I urge Hon. Members of the Conservative Party who really believe in small "c" conservatism to make their views known and vote against this Bill, and in so doing express to the Minister and to their own Government their dissatisfaction with this Bill.

Mr. Hopkins: Mr. Speaker, I am always interested when certain Hon. Members of the New Democratic Party rise to speak in this House. They are always zeroing in on nuclear energy which is one of the most successful stories in Canadian high technology today. The Hon. Member talks about energy. If he would talk to the leading scientists in the nuclear field, they would tell him that not only do we need nuclear energy for peaceful purposes but we also need the alternate sources of energy, as well as conservation.

There is no argument with that. But does the Hon. Member not realize that the nuclear reactors at Pickering produce far more energy than Niagara Falls ever did? Does he not realize that industrial development would not have occurred in central Canada without that massive source of energy? Would the Hon. Member not agree that there are probably some Americans on the eastern seaboard who went into darkness a few years ago who would have been very grateful if they had had the same safe system?

Something that always bothers me about this issue, Mr. Speaker, is that nuclear energy for peaceful purposes is quite often equated with nuclear armaments for destructive purposes. There should be no relationship between the two because Canada has gone the peaceful route. Does the Hon. Member not realize that the years which have been spent on nuclear energy research in Canada have not just been spent on experimenting with nuclear reactors? The cobalt therapy unit which was developed at Chalk River, Ontario, is one of the leading cures for cancer today. All kinds of companies go to Atomic Energy of Canada Limited to sign contracts for