

Renewable Resources

however, to find that we do not seem to place the kind of emphasis on it that I would like to see. I am absolutely sure that the future of this country and of the world will be dependent on the renewable resources which we know are there but for which we have not yet developed either the technology or the will to use them. As I look at the matter, I am persuaded that it is common sense that we cannot continue to rely on a depletable resource for the fuelling needs of all the world. We will have to find and develop substitutes and we will find and develop them. The sooner we do it, the better will be the planning undertaken for the future which so many of us try to put forward for Canadians. We will develop new substances for lubrication. We are in the process of doing it right now. It is therefore important that we spend more of our time, more of our energy and more of our available dollars in that development. We will develop new ways of fuelling our transportation systems and we will develop new transportation systems to accommodate the new fuelling methods. But, again, we are being held up by the sense that somehow or other we should use up all of the existing petroleum-based products before we really turn our minds and our attention to the alternatives which are not necessary if we are to be able to meet future demand. We will find ways to build homes and places of business with the proper kind of conservation in mind and with the new fuelling methods which will both run industry as it emerges and develops and heat and cool the places in which we will work and live.

I am not sure what it is about the psyche of those in charge which allows them to play fast and loose with energy itself. It is quite clear to me that the emphasis which is being placed by the government on the dollar, as measured by the dollars it allocates for petroleum-based fuels, is the result of advice being given to it. In my judgment it has been misguided by the advice. I would have thought that having gone through a minicrisis not many months ago with regard to energy available from traditional sources, the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources would have placed greater emphasis on larger amounts of capital reserves for the use of renewable resources. I hope I am not doing them a disservice but it seems to me that the reason for this is the size and the importance of the lobby. I do not want to detract from the place that petroleum-based products have had in the growth of our society, nor do I want to downplay its continuing importance but I despair to think that we constantly inflate the price of the resource and use it up at the present rate without putting equivalent amounts into the development of a replacement resource. Recently some \$6.5 billion was earmarked for PIP grants to the oil industry at the same time as funding for forestry research was cut back. We have not been able to keep pace with need. We cannot rely on the chance that somewhere along the way we will be able to find a sufficient quantity of petroleum-based products to meet the ever growing need. I am worried that we are not putting the money into renewable resources that we are prepared to put into depletable resources.

• (1620)

In the energy crisis of the 1970s the State of Vermont quickly shifted back to the use of wood, a renewable energy resource. It would not be entirely true to say that it has maintained the level of use at that time but, in the main, it was a permanent transition because people realized that they cannot rely on a resource from outside the country over which they have no control when it comes to price or delivery. With each passing day that resource is becoming more elusive and less available. We could have made the transition as well, had we foreseen the crisis. If we had planned well we could have taken advantage of our ability to grow similar kinds of wood supplies. I do not doubt for a moment that in Canada we have the necessary technology to do this.

In the long run the cost will be considerably lower if we invest in the development of renewable resources now than if we wait until another crisis occurs. If we wait until some oil company announces that we do not have thirty years' supply left but only five to seven years' supply, the cost of making the transition could be ten times as high as it would be today.

I think it is fair to say that we should offer the same grants for renewable energy as have been offered for depletable energy resources. We must increase, rather than cut back, funding for research and development in such areas as the forest industry. We just cannot allow it to find its own level and fund its own research because these days it does not generate sufficient funds to enable it to undertake the necessary work. Before the next crisis hits we must undertake the public education that will encourage people to make the transition. This cannot be done by scare tactics. People are becoming almost immune to the scare tactics that were used some years ago. There must be another way to convince people that it is in their long-term interest to switch from what they presently use to something that will last forever.

One reason we have difficulty with this is that when the off-oil program, for example, was introduced, people were encouraged to switch to natural gas or electricity. At the time natural gas cost considerably less than oil, but it did not take long for that industry to realize it had a captive market and that once people had invested in the necessary retrofitting they were not in a position to switch back again. In that instance the natural gas industry took unfair advantage of the public's desire to be helpful in the battle against ever-increasing fuel costs and the unwise use of existing resources. It is not fair to get people to switch from one resource to another and then allow them to be ripped off. I think that is what happened over the last couple of years.

I want to say to the hon. member that, as he admitted, this is a small step but I think it is a worthwhile one. It will constantly keep in front of the people who plan these things the fact that we in this House who represent Canadians are no longer satisfied with the approach taken in the last few years. It is their responsibility for the future to place emphasis upon utilization and development, upon reforestation and what can be maintained as a renewable resource and to see that it is not used without proper management. Nothing is renewable if it is