

I suggest to him that there are legitimate reasons to delay this Bill for six months with respect to off-oil conversion.

A six-month hoist is usually a symbolic motion indicating opposition to a Bill. However, this is not the case with respect to this amendment. We believe the Government should postpone the completion date of the off-oil program from March 31, 1985, to September 30, 1985.

Many Members have stood up to give examples from their constituencies of why the program should be maintained. The Hon. Member for Churchill (Mr. Murphy) cited the case of people in his riding who wanted to order parts for off-oil conversion but must wait for those parts to come from Montreal or Toronto. There have been cases of constituents from northern Ontario who cannot put in gas lines because the ground is frozen. A six-month delay of this legislation would allow more gas lines to be installed and for people to take advantage of the program to convert from oil, which is being depleted, to natural gas, of which there is a surplus.

The Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Cassidy) told us of the line-ups of people in his riding who want to apply for this particular program. The program is not that costly to the Government. Possibly one-third of the funds will go back to the Government in the form of taxes. These programs have resulted in a saving of approximately 45,000 barrels of oil per day, accounting for up to 3 per cent saving in the annual use of oil in Canada. If the Government wants to consult with people and be rational, it will consider our proposal to extend the deadline until September. It is only fair and just. There are Canadians in different parts of the country who cannot take advantage of the program.

• (1610)

I heard the Hon. Member for York East say Canadians will substitute anyway, that Canadians, being rational beings, will go to other forms of energy such as hydro, wood or natural gas rather than oil. I suggest to the Hon. Member that that may not be true and I will tell you why, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Take that back.

Mr. McDermid: You are saying Canadians are not rational?

Mr. Waddell: No, I am not saying Canadians are not rational.

Mr. Blackburn (Brant): Canadians cannot afford it.

Mr. Waddell: Some Canadians cannot afford it. Some Canadians who may be able to afford it are looking at the price of world oil. I suggest they may be thinking that the price of world oil is going to drop. I think the price of world oil will drop in a short time.

Mr. Blackburn (Brant): The banks won't let it.

Mr. Waddell: It is already dropping. Canadians will say, "Why should we bother converting?" I get clippings from lots of different jurisdictions. I have been looking at clippings from some of the American commentators who are warning us.

Oil Substitution Act

They say that we have made lots of progress in energy conservation, but now we are back-tracking. Energy conservation is getting out of fashion with the public because the public thinks the price of oil is going to go down.

Mr. Blackburn (Brant): Not in the long run.

Mr. Waddell: I think it will go down in the short run. We are going to have a problem because it is a depleting resource. The price will eventually go up. The price could go up very suddenly if this Gulf war escalates, particularly as it relates to the conflict between Iraq and Iran which is already escalating. If Saudi Arabia gets involved the price of oil will go up very rapidly. Once again Canadians will be caught.

The Government is giving Canadians \$800 out of about \$2,000 to change a furnace. It is a little bit of a carrot to help Canadians. Then there is \$500 for CHIP. For once we have given the ordinary Canadian a break. Consumers are paying all the costs in this country. Oil companies are not the ones that are paying. It is our oil. Canadian consumers are paying 50 cents a litre for gas at the pump. Here we give poor ordinary Canadians a break. This Government has no problem in giving \$1.6 billion to the oil companies. It has turned around and I do not understand what it is doing. The Government's first attack on the National Energy Program, which it justifiably criticized when in opposition—

Mr. McDermid: Which you supported.

Mr. Waddell: Which we did not support. We criticized the same things the Tories criticized. We supported the conservation aspects of the program. It is working. One million households have taken advantage of the off-oil program. Another 900,000 households are waiting. Why cut off the program? We have lean Canadian small business companies involved. What does the Government do, Mr. Speaker? It cuts them off and favours instead the largely fat big foreign-owned oil companies.

Mr. Blackburn (Brant): The Tories are against small businesses.

Mr. Waddell: Why is the Government attacking conservation first? Why do government Members stand up and say they are against grants? I heard the Member here and I heard the Member there. They are against grants. Are they against grants on regional diversification and regional employment? I heard the Hon. Member for Western Arctic (Mr. Nickerson) speak. I know his area. I lived in Yellowknife. If we cut off those grants, the whole place would die in a month. I heard the Member over here speak about cutting off grants. Some grants are good, some grants are bad. You cannot generally say that we have to cut off grants. We give grants. Are we going to cut off the home ownership program and the RRSPs? This is the modern world. The Government intervenes all over the place. In this one program the Government intervened on behalf of the ordinary Canadian, the home owner, and gave him a little bit of a break. This Government proposes to attack it now.