

Oil Substitution Act

thing that ever happened to Canadians who have to heat their homes.

It is a great pleasure for me to be able to stand here today and say that I am 100 per cent fully in support of this legislation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Nickerson: When it comes to the expenditure of very limited amounts of public moneys which this Government has available to it, our stated case is that we want that money to go where it can benefit the people who are most in need.

Mr. Boudria: Buy limousines. That is what you want to do.

Mr. Nickerson: The people most in need are not the ones who are taking advantage of programs such as the ones we are doing away with today. The people who are taking maximum advantage of these two programs are the people who are reasonably well off in Canadian society.

Mr. Waddell: Not so.

Mr. Nickerson: They are the people who have nice houses. It is good for them to be able to save a few dollars at taxpayers' expense. The people who really need assistance have not been taking advantage of these programs. It is the reasonably well off Canadians who have done so. It is our view on this side of the House that Canadians are responsible people.

It is not necessary for the Government, by means of programs such as this, to direct that people spend money in certain areas and not in others. We think that Canadians should be taxed as lightly as possible and that the maximum amount of funds be left in their pockets. We believe Canadians should make the decision as to how they want to spend those funds.

What the Liberals have been doing is what the NDP would undoubtedly do even more were that Party in power—but that is never likely to happen. They might, of course, come back as the Official Opposition a few years from now; that is a distinct possibility.

Mr. Blackburn (Brant): A very real possibility.

Mr. Nickerson: Yes, the way the Liberals are acting is making it more and more a distinct possibility every day. The Liberals have been taking money out of people's pockets by way of high taxation and then giving it back to them in dribs and drabs in programs such as these. Canadians, however, have refuted that attitude. They said that they have had enough of that and that they want to make their own decisions. Canadians want to decide whether to spend their money on new furnaces, to drink it away in a bar, or to invest it in something. That is the people's decision, not the Government's decision to make. When Canadians were given the choice on September 4, they voted to make their own decisions.

Mr. Boudria: They voted for the promises and you broke them.

Mr. Nickerson: In programs such as the ones before us where the Government has to deal with thousands and thousands of individuals and all kinds of different contractors, administration is extremely difficult. We have to hire more and more people, put them into the Government's employ, and then they make the decision whether Fred Smith or Bill Jones will get this money.

Mr. Blackburn (Brant): That is called job creation.

Mr. Nickerson: I do not think that is the way we should go about this. We should try and keep the Public Service to a minimum. We should not have to hire more and more people for very complicated systems of administration nor give these people the authority to say whether one person gets a grant and somebody else does not.

Mr. Waddell: If you did not give a grant to the Northwest Territories, it would disappear.

Mr. Nickerson: When Government has programs or legislation in effect, they should be easy to administer. A program should be something in black and white where one knows whether a person is eligible or not. It should not be necessary to have someone in the employ of the Government to make that decision for you.

● (1130)

It was part of the Liberal practice to try, wherever possible, to give out cheques to individuals regardless of the general expense. They took money out of the pockets of people and then gave it back to them in some form or another. Because of complicated administration, they got back maybe 60 cents on the dollar. By giving people these cheques, the Liberals were trying to buy votes. That was the idea behind this type of program. It was not to encourage oil conservation or all the great reasons which were given at the time. It was very simple: it was political. Somebody would have a \$500 cheque from the Government and would say: "what great guys are these Liberals; we will vote for them". That was the idea but it did not work.

In my opinion the time is right for getting rid of these programs and others like them. We do not need to put it off for six months as is sought in the motion. The time for decision is now, and I hope we can vote on it in the very near future.

Miss Aideen Nicholson (Trinity): Mr. Speaker, I have read very carefully the speech of the Parliamentary Secretary in introducing this Bill. I have also listened carefully to the interventions of Government Members when I have been in the House. While they have made some persuasive arguments, I remain unconvinced that this Bill is at all wise.

The Bill proposes to eliminate two energy grant programs. COSP, which was introduced in 1977 to wind up on December 31, 1990, is being cut off from March 31, except for those who signed contracts before November 8. They will have up to June 30 to complete conversions. The second program, CHIP, which was introduced in 1977 to wind up at the end of 1987, is