

Oil Substitution Act

has been a success. In fact, almost one million units have been converted under the program. Why on earth would the Government see fit to eliminate one of the most successful programs, both in terms of job creation and energy conservation, which we have had in Canada for many, many years? It does not make sense.

Certainly, the program has cost money in the short term, but by conserving energy and assisting in the conversion from oil to other forms of energy, money will be saved in the long term. That is what we in the NDP believe is good planning—spend a little money now so that in the future money will be saved when the cost of oil becomes much higher.

I have already mentioned the benefits of this program in terms of energy conservation. There are also very significant benefits for people across the country and in particular for my constituents in Burnaby where there are many more older homes. There are benefits in terms of job creation. For every \$1 million which was spent in this program in 1979 dollars, some 30.5 person-years of employment were created. As a result of the grants which have been made so far, there have been almost 17,000 person-years of employment created. At a time when this country is being ravaged by unemployment, it does not make sense to cut back on a program which creates jobs, and at the same time as it creates jobs, it saves energy.

● (1230)

It makes an awful lot more sense to put money into energy conservation than it does to put money into creating new weapons of destruction. We heard the Prime Minister suggest that star wars will create jobs so let's put billions and billions of dollars into research on star wars, working hand in glove with President Ronald Reagan. If we want to talk seriously about the creation of jobs, let's put the money into sectors of the economy from which we get a lot more bang for the buck than the military sector. I suggest that the energy conservation sector is an important sector. Instead of putting money into the military, we should be putting money into energy conservation.

The Tories, when they were in opposition, certainly did not suggest that this program was going to be eliminated. In fact, they supported the program. I do not recall the Tory candidate in Burnaby during the last federal election saying that if a Conservative Government is elected it is going to eliminate grants for energy conservation. No, there was no suggestion of that. I do not recall the Prime Minister saying on national media that if the people elect a Tory Government one of the first things it will do is cut off very important grants for energy conservation. No, that Party was silent about that hidden agenda.

I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that this Bill is a regressive and backward move. It hits the consumers of this country and attacks energy conservation. Certainly on that basis we intend to fight it with every ounce of energy we have.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate once more in the debate on this Bill. We have been debating this Bill in this House for some

time and I think it requires further debate because, obviously, the Government has not yet seen the light. Of course, seeing the light would mean a complete retraction of its initial position. I see some Hon. Members of the Conservative Party across from me, Mr. Speaker, and I am sure that their constituents are telling them, like ours are telling us, that this program needs to be kept.

Bill C-24 was introduced in this House as a result of black Thursday, November 8, when the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) perpetrated his vicious expenditure and program review document on the people of Canada. One of the side effects of this document, of course, is the serious cut-backs in employment and benefits to ordinary Canadians. I am sure that most of the people who would have benefited from this program in the future are the very same people who could least afford to make those conversions on their own.

I see my colleague from Nipissing is here. I am sure that all the people of Springer Township would want that program retained. They would not want it cancelled because they know the value of that program, as do the people of Ottawa West.

I would like to congratulate the Hon. Member for Cape Breton-The Sydneys (Mr. MacLellan) for the tremendous effort he has put forward in attacking this Bill. It was a very necessary attack because this is very regressive legislation.

I received a letter from the Electrical Contractors' Association of Ottawa. I would just like briefly to read part of it to you, Mr. Speaker, because I know the Hon. Member for Ottawa West (Mr. Daubney) has also received a copy. I am sure he has read it as well, but just in case he has forgotten some of its contents I would like to refresh his memory. The letter was sent to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Miss Carney). It reads:

Due to the serious shortage of electrical heating equipment, most of which will not be manufactured until late March, it appears that many home owners who have signed contracts for the conversion of their heating systems will find themselves ineligible for the COSP grant. This is not the fault of the contractor who believed there would be no problem of availability well before the March 31 deadline.

We propose that the COSP program be extended to September 30, 1985, a more realistic date, considering the heating season in Canada does not end March 31.

I am sure that it had not occurred to the Minister of Finance that the heating season does not quite end on March 31 in the balmy part of the country he comes from, but in my part of the country we still require heating as do, I am sure, the people of Ottawa West. The letter continues:

Our members are concerned that their customers receive the best service possible and we urge you to consider their proposals immediately. Failure to act on these proposals would be a severe blow to many contractors and most unfair to home owners.

Knowing the interest Hon. Members of the Conservative Party have in the well-being of the home owners of this country, I am sure they would not want to do anything which would unduly harm them. We have heard over the last few weeks of debate from some Conservative Hon. Members who have said: "Well, we had to cut back on this because we just cannot afford it". The Conservatives have decided to cut in