

Solar Energy

administration. The centres were set up for a set period of time, but they ran out of money before that. Just when the people in the centres became knowledgeable in the subject, the funding ran out.

We should use as an example here the Franklin Institute in the United States where people knowledgeable in the subject of renewable sources of energy and conservation were established in cities across the country and told that free Zenith numbers would be provided for inquiries. Capable individuals were hired to staff these offices. Here in Canada a program in each province to educate people about the existence of such offices could be set up. People could be told where they can phone to obtain the necessary information, and if they wished more detailed information they would be told where suitable manufacturers are located and the quality of equipment available.

I spoke about three areas in the bill. I have no objection to seeing the bill go to committee. There are many questions which I should like to ask and some amendments I would like to see made. I recognize that the hon. member for Davenport is fully aware of the importance of renewable energy and I am prepared to fight side by side with him to see that this legislation goes ahead as quickly as possible.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that my time is nearly up and I see your eagerness to interrupt me. We have a number of policy proposals which were announced on International Sun Day last May. They still stand as a way to break ground and get renewable energy moving in this country so as to provide heat for homes and businesses and reduce our reliance on oil and gas.

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, I should like to commend the hon. member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia) for once more bringing before parliament this piece of legislation, Bill C-210, an act to establish the solar energy institute. As he has already said, it is very similar to legislation which was approved by the House previously. I hope that this time the House will pass it, that the committee will pass it, and the other place will pass it, and that this legislation will go onto the statute books. I do not want to talk it to death and therefore I shall make my comments very brief.

I will give the reasons why something along the line of what is proposed by the hon. member should be put into effect. First of all, we need to recognize in Canada just how serious is the energy situation. The hon. member for Davenport referred several times to the fact that solar energy would save so many hundreds of thousands of barrels of oil in the year 2000 and so many hundreds of thousands of barrels more by the year 2025. The fact of the matter is that by the year 2025, in terms of conventional oil, we might not have very much oil. Our own supplies will probably be exhausted in the mid-1990s.

The international authorities estimate that by the year 2000, or earlier, Saudi Arabia will be the only country in the world with oil to export, so that the fossil fuels, oil, gas and coal are being rapidly depleted. Unfortunately, we have become so used

to these crises that we have become hardened to them, and fail to recognize how serious this situation is. That means that all of our technology, our science and our forward planning should be devoted to looking at renewable sources of energy. Whether it is geothermal power, tidal power, utilization of forest waste, biomass or solar energy, all of them have a part to play, and we ought to be using our research and scientific facilities to look at these various options.

I am one of the persons who has said repeatedly over the years, from my very limited experience, that no one is going to find a cure-all for the energy crisis, that there is no one thing that will solve the problem. It will have to be a mix of renewable and non-renewable resources. That is why I feel we should not rush into spending billions of dollars putting up scores of nuclear plants, because if we spend too much on high cost facilities we shall feel obliged to stay in that area in order to get back our capital investment. There should be a mix enabling us to move into whatever areas prove most advantageous. All sources of energy, fossil fuels, nuclear power, solar power, will have to be used until we can work out a mix which will best suit our circumstances. Solar energy therefore has an important part to play. Setting up an institute, if that is the best way of doing it, could serve a useful purpose.

• (1750)

I recognize the reservations you have, Mr. Speaker, as to the propriety of the bill from a procedural point of view. I would point out, however, that while the governor general in council might appoint the directors it is not mandatory that they should be paid; the directors could be persons willing to give their time free of charge as a public service. I would be one. Money would be needed, of course, but there is no reason why, under clause 7, revenues and donations could not be secured from individuals, companies and organizations having a stake in promoting the development of solar energy.

Canada has an opportunity to be in the forefront of this development. I have had a chance to see what is being done in Australia, Hong Kong, Singapore, Israel, and the United States which is probably ahead of all other countries in this field. I hope the time will come when the government or, failing the government, some institute with general support, will bring together all the talent and expertise of the scientific community in order to develop a practical, inexpensive unit for harnessing solar energy.

I know that experiments are going on in some of the provinces. I know that Saskatchewan is experimenting with a house which is completely serviced by solar energy, and that a number of private firms are also experimenting in this field. What I am suggesting is work on a model which can be put into mass production. I submit there is a billion dollar industry waiting to be picked up. The developing countries which lack hydro power and fossil fuels are crying out for cheap, readily available and easily installed solar energy equipment, and the country which moves into this field will be moving into an area of enormous potential.