

*Energy Conservation*

an era in which conservation is as important a part of our energy policy as increase in supply has been. I call attention to the amount of legislation placed before the House having to do with increases in supply during the fall of 1973 and throughout 1974. On the other hand, the conservation program was really only launched early in the present year. The government will continue to bring forward additional measures which will be in keeping with this new status of energy conservation.

Changes of the magnitude required will not be easy or painless. For a long time Canada has been living in what an English author has called a "fuel's paradise", ignoring the fact that our consumption of energy was growing at rates in no way sustainable even if supply prospects were far more optimistic than in fact they are. That is why I say changes cannot be made without difficulty and without some pain. I trust that when, in the near future, the government publishes measures requiring approval and action, we shall find that everyone is with us in our efforts to conserve energy in all regions of Canada, in all sectors of our industry and in all phases of our personal lives.

Let me turn, now, to the IEA report which is really the substance of the motion before us. The motion cites conclusions from a report prepared at the International Energy Agency in Paris last spring. In order to make this report more widely available and to ensure that its conclusions can be read in context, arrangements have been made whereby hon. members can obtain copies from the office of energy conservation. Unfortunately, the official report of IEA is available only in English, otherwise I would be glad to table it this afternoon for hon. members.

A report similar to this one on the Canadian situation was prepared with regard to each of the 17 member nations of the International Energy Agency. While Canada has participated actively in this evaluation work, we are not free to release any of the other reports. Each nation can release only the results of its own study. However, I might add that in a preliminary ranking of national conservation programs Canada ranked tenth among the 17 nations. This is not a worthy position but neither is it as bad as is implied by the motion before the House. The full report contains considerable praise for the Canadian program. Furthermore, some of the criticism is based on analyses of energy demand forecasts which, at the time the report was prepared, were still those contained in phase one of our energy policy studies, that is, forecasts consistent with the low prices which were then still prevailing throughout Canada. Since that time, the government has taken steps to permit energy prices to begin rising toward world levels and consumption forecasts have been revised sharply downward.

In other words, when the report was being prepared last spring, forecasts were being based on phase one of the energy report and the comparatively low prices which prevailed in the early summer of 1973. This is particularly significant since the most important criticism in the IEA report was directed to our low energy prices. I am sure that if we moved toward raising those prices to the level of world prices any more rapidly than we are presently doing, we would encounter a fair amount of criticism from members on the other side of the House.

Nervetheless, we have to accept in considerable part the statement quoted in the motion, which is to be found on

[Mr. Foster.]

the final page of the IEA report. Though we have created an office of energy conservation, though an imaginative program was presented to the House last February, and though we have taken part in numerous discussions with other governments both inside and outside Canada, the measures which have been specifically undertaken to conserve energy are as follows: First, the removal of the federal sales tax on insulating materials brought about in the last budget. Second, the introduction of an excise tax related to weight on the largest automobiles, and the imposition of a 10 per cent tax on private aircraft and on marine motors of more than 20 horsepower. Third, the introduction of stricter insulation requirements in the building code followed by Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Both the hon. member for Don Valley and the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Douglas) suggested that no action had been taken. In fact, the index of the Canadian code governing residential construction has been doubled from a factor of R-6 to R-12. The latter figure was previously specified for electrically heated homes but it now applies to all homes governed by the code, the one used by CMHC. The fourth item is the levying of a 10 per cent per gallon tax increase on motor gasoline for non-business use. I suggest that this is not a bad record though it falls far short of what is needed.

It was the contrast between the strong statements made by ministers of this government and the relatively few changes introduced to date which occasioned the statement about the existence of a substantial gap between principle and practice. However, I can assure the House that the cabinet does recognize the need to implement the goal of energy conservation with specific actions. Consider what has been done in nine months relative to the five-part program put forward by the minister of energy, mines and resources last February. This is a five-part program, part one of which called for putting the federal government's own house in order. Considerable progress has been achieved in this regard. With certain exceptions, lights are now turned off in most government buildings at night. I believe there are only one or two which require specific mechanical changes before this can be accomplished. A standing order requires the purchase of only compact or sub-compact vehicles unless continuing requirements indicate the need for a larger vehicle. A 55 miles per hour speed limit has been introduced for federal vehicles.

● (1610)

I might say, in responding to the hon. member for Don Valley on that point, that it was the federal government which gave leadership in reducing the speed limit for automobiles in this country, and now at least two provinces have adopted this policy. Meetings were held among officials last spring and it has been a subject raised at other meetings, as well, of conservation officials at the director level in an attempt to get the speed limit reduced. A survey conducted by the Canadian Press a few days ago indicated there were several other governments which indicated they were going to move toward a lower speed limit.

The computer-aided building design and operation team in the Department of Public Works, one of the best anywhere, has been expanded and given authority to establish training programs throughout Canada so that these tech-