

*Oil Substitution Act*

I believe the Hon. Member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mr. Waddell) has a reasonable point. He did move a motion which ended his time to speak; he did in fact speak on the motion, and he is correct, given all of the arguments about debate versus questions and comments, that in fact there remains a ten-minute question and comment period on the speech of the Hon. Member for Vancouver-Kingsway.

**Mr. Althouse:** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Hon. Member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mr. Waddell) could explain to the House some of the problems which his constituents have had because of the off-oil program being cut so quickly?

**Mr. Waddell:** Mr. Speaker, as Ministers say when they are asked a question by one of their own back-benchers, I thank the Hon. Member very much for the question.

The Hon. Member's question is an important one. I say through you, Mr. Speaker, that the House should understand that what these Bills do is bring two programs to an end at different times. We are finding—and many Hon. Members have approached me about this—an injustice in certain parts of the country. I will give you examples of how injustices have occurred to some of my constituents.

This Bill, Mr. Speaker, eliminates the off-oil program known as COSP, the Canadian off-oil special program, through which home owners receive financial assistance to convert their furnaces from oil—because we are at a point where we are starting to use our resources which are non-conventional and therefore a lot more expensive—to a heating system generated by natural gas, electricity, wood or solar energy.

This program was used to switch users to other means of energy such as natural gas, which we have a lot of; electricity, which we produce in abundance; wood, which we are blessed with; or solar energy, which we are developing with our new technologies and which, by the way, is a clean modern renewable form of energy. This program was to last until 1990 and now it is going to come to an abrupt halt on March 31, 1985.

I find it really ironic that the Conservatives when they were the Opposition attacked the 1980 National Energy Program of the Liberal Government. The irony is that the first Bill put forward by the Conservative Government dealing with energy attacks the one part of the National Energy Program which was working. The National Energy Program was working in respect to conservation and energy alternates. It made a lot of sense. When the Conservatives were in opposition they agreed with it.

The Hon. Member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton) is a senior Hon. Member of this House. He was a Minister in the Diefenbaker Government. I was a young lad interested in politics, I remember, at the time of the Diefenbaker Government. I remember that people used to say that that fellow from Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain was one of the "thinkers" of the House of Commons. The context was that they really didn't have too many thinkers. Things, of course, have improved since then. We now have two thinkers. We have

increased by 100 per cent. He said, and I quote from *Hansard* of June 30, 1981, at page 11099:

● (1220)

It is a good philosophy to get as many people in the low technology systems as possible to move away from the consumption of oil. It is particularly good, if the alternative is cheaper not only than the present price of oil but the future price as well.

He spoke in support of COSP, which we passed in an hour in this House in 1981 and which we made retroactive to 1980. The Conservatives supported it and the Hon. Member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain spoke in the debate. He also said:

I do not think there is any question that the House in general understands and supports the purpose of the oil substitution program—

The Conservatives were on board then, so what is the problem? The problem is that we are only half way toward our goal. We will now go back to the system where we are favouring the oil companies, who in this country are generally fat, foreign and very influential with this Government. Contrast that with the alternate energy people who are lean, Canadian and, unfortunately, out of influence with this Government.

**Mr. McDermid:** Wrong.

**Mr. Waddell:** The Hon. Member says "wrong". Why is he then cutting this program? The program seems to be working, and cutting it means some injustices. I will give you an example.

The NDP Member from Thunder Bay-Nipigon (Mr. Epp) wrote to the Minister on February 8, and I have a copy of his letter, saying that his people in Thunder Bay would like to take advantage of switching to natural gas. They pay a lot to heat their homes in northern Ontario and they have a chance to switch to natural gas. They are waiting for the gas to come in, and it is coming in. The Hon. Member said in his letter that many home owners wish to take advantage of COSP grants before the March deadline for completion of the installation and they are being denied assistance. He asked the Minister to allow extensions under the extenuating circumstances apparent in these cases. Here is an example of some constituents of a fellow MP who are having difficulty. It is an injustice because they cannot take advantage of the program as they are still waiting for the gas lines to come in.

I have another letter from the Hon. Member for Churchill (Mr. Murphy). His problem is that some of these small businesses that want to take advantage of the program are still waiting for parts to come in from Toronto and Montreal. They are going to suffer because the program is going to be cut off.

I am asking the Government to extend the deadline. That is a fallback strategy, because I would like the Government to keep the program until 1990. If it cannot be, then why not give a short extension so the injustices in Thunder Bay, Churchill and in other ridings can be rectified? I know that in my riding people are lined up to take advantage of the program before it expires.