

been allocated for this program. Initially it was envisaged that about 25 grants of \$10,000 each would be awarded to firms so that they could prepare solar equipment design proposals. After that the idea was that the government would make ten contributions of \$200,000 to \$300,000 each. Initially I had some reservations about this program, and I believe I still do.

The choices for grants have been very good. They have been applied across the whole field of renewable energy, and many grants have been made to small business firms which are the ones which I think have shown the most initiative in this area. I know large companies are getting involved because they see a lucrative market, particularly in the United States. I commend this involvement, but I would also like to see small business involvement. The government should help with research, and after research is undertaken small business should be encouraged to become involved in providing technology to the market. It appears that we will have to watch very closely to see whether small businesses will be bought off by small grants and whether large grants will be going to large international firms so that they can continue the research.

There are already some problems. I asked a question of the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Ouellet) some weeks ago as to when application forms were made available for these grants. We learned that a few weeks before the application deadline the Department of Public Works changed the format. I believe the application form was about 70 pages long. Large companies employ people to handle such forms, but small businesses comprising one, two, or perhaps ten individuals would take some time to go through a 70-page application form to make the necessary changes. It seems to me that there is a push away from small business and that help is being given to larger businesses.

Compared with the United States, Canada has a long way to go in the research field. For the fiscal year 1980 the Americans have set aside some \$500 million for work in solar energy research and development. This money is intended to support a wide variety of technologies aimed at harnessing the sun's rays. In past years grants have amounted to hundreds of millions of dollars. While we are now getting a slow start in this area, I think we will have to recognize that most research will be done in the United States, and that will increase our need to import technology. We are going to be behind.

The United States has recognized the importance of solar technology now, and not five years down the road. This government's policy seems to be geared to events five or ten years down the road. So far all this government has done has been to provide research grants to a number of industries. That is commendable, but in no way does it allow industry to begin manufacturing quality solar collectors now. In many states of the United States tax credits are allowed for that purpose. In California swimming pools cannot be built unless they are heated by solar energy.

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President Carter is prepared to put in a solar installation tax incentive as part of his energy program. This legislation might

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well have passed the House in the United States by now. They have recognized that although at present these installations are slightly more expensive because of the price of natural gas, these prices are going up. It is essential to use renewable energy forms in houses today in order to cut back on our reliance on natural gas and oil. The United States is doing that by use of tax credits. I believe this to be very important. It forms part of the Progressive Conservative platform on renewable energy, and if tax credits were provided in this country they would be of great benefit.

I should now like to go on to clause 4(c) on preparing, compiling, publishing and distributing information. It is a very important clause in this bill. There is a tremendous amount of information available on renewable energy. I can remember complaining in a committee of the House of Commons that this information was not available to members of the public and that even I, as a member of parliament, did not have it. I was slightly amused when the following day boxes of material arrived at my office. I appreciated that, because it helped me to become more knowledgeable on renewable energy forms and it also proved to me that much information was available to the public. However, the problem I saw was that while there was a good deal of information, there was not one pamphlet regarding each area in which simple questions would be answered that a person considering the use of renewable energy forms in his home would ask, some basic questions as to how this energy form is set up, how much it would cost, what are its chances of failure, and other questions of that nature.

I found that in the United States there are a number of simple, basic pamphlets available to consumers of renewable energy, particularly in the solar area. They are small, five page pamphlets which contain answers to basic questions, and refer the person interested to a number of other booklets giving more detailed information. I think that is very necessary, and I believe that if this bill is passed an institute could be set up for the purpose of providing information, concerning renewable sources of energy, in simple pamphlet form. I suppose the government has attempted to do that through community conservation centres, but unfortunately they failed, in my opinion. A number of serious problems cropped up in the setting up of these community conservation centres.

I should like to make a few comments about the serious errors that were made in that area. First, an inadequate range of materials was provided to people at these centres. Many of those centres were understaffed and the people undertrained. All they had was a two-week training period. They were hired without any knowledge and given only a two-week training period, following which they were supposed to be able to give detailed technical information on renewable energy and conservation.

In many cases, the employees of the centres were not suitable for the job. They went about chastising other agencies which had the necessary information available, and they appeared at the doors of people who did not know what it was all about. In many cases the people hired were not suitable. We found also that there were breakdowns in financial