

Oil Substitution Act

● (1110)

The very least this Government should do, Mr. Speaker, and I am sure you know this being in the non-partisan position you are in, is extend the program until the fall so that installations can be properly done in the summer. Of course, the best solution is to cancel the Government's idea to start with and allow COSP to continue. But again, the big act of the Minister of Finance seems to be what takes effect in this House.

After the Government tabled its expenditure and program review documents it gave a briefing book to Cabinet Ministers which told them what to say if they were asked some embarrassing questions concerning the cut-backs. I have a copy of the briefing book here. There are things the Minister was supposed to say. I am sure the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Miss MacDonald) has her copy handy right now so let us see what they are supposed to reply when asked about the CHIP program. This is supposed to be a question a journalist might ask a Minister: "What is the rationale behind phasing out the Canadian Home Insulation Program? Federal CHIP grants have proven very popular among Canadians". Here is the Minister's tailor-made reply. I am sure the Parliamentary Secretary already knows this reply by heart because the Cabinet Minister must have given him a copy of the briefing book even though it is a secret document.

Mr. McDermid: I wrote it.

Mr. Boudria: Maybe he wrote it, Mr. Speaker. It says: "That's correct, and energy conservation in Canadian homes remains an important national objective. But we will have to pursue it in ways less costly to the federal treasury. Home owners will find that investing in energy conservation is still worthwhile, with or without grants. We have extended the program to March 31, 1986, to continue the impact on insulation manufacturers, contractors and consumers". Well, perhaps the Minister can get his home reinsulated without getting a grant, but the majority of my electors and the majority of the electors of the Hon. Member sitting right here cannot afford that. They need assistance to be able to do it.

Mr. McDermid: They have had it for eight years now; what have they been doing?

Mr. Boudria: Again the Parliamentary Secretary is perhaps in a financial position to do everything in one day, but some of my constituents are poor. They cannot afford it. They have to wait until they get the money. Unlike this Government, they cannot just borrow when they need to do something; they have to save up their money first.

Mr. McDermid: They have another year to go.

Mr. Boudria: Perhaps this Tory Government should learn how to do the same thing. The Parliamentary Secretary says they have another year to go. Yes, but at one half the benefit. They are going to be getting less, and that of course is totally unworkable.

Let us hear what the Cabinet Ministers were supposed to answer when they had questions on the oil substitution program. Here is a question: "Does the same reasoning apply to the winding up of the Canadian Oil Substitution Program?" The potential answer is: "Yes, to the extent that converting off oil is a good deal without Government financial help. The trend towards reduced use of oil is well established and federal incentives cannot be continued in a time of restraint". It is a time of restraint—

Mrs. Sparrow: That is right.

Mr. Boudria:—and that is why the grants have been cut off from low-income constituents. I see the Hon. Member from Scarborough—no? I forget the name of her riding. The Hon. Member beside me is saying that is right, it is a time of restraint. This Government says it is a time of restraint.

● (1115)

I am very sorry to have to conclude my remarks so soon, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to tell Hon. Members of all the extravagances of the Government since it has been in power. With unanimous consent of Members I would gladly tell them the cost of renovating Cabinet Ministers' offices.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Papproski): I regret the Hon. Member's time has expired.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops-Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to have an opportunity to reflect on two or three concerns that have been brought to my attention by literally hundreds of my constituents in the last number of weeks. I am, of course, referring to the Canadian Oil Substitution Program and the Canadian Home Insulation Program. For all intents and purposes these two programs will be closed down as of March 31 of this year. For most of Canada that is still wintertime. Most of the country is still coming out of the depths of that cold period. It is a difficult time to be making the transition from an oil furnace to a gas furnace, a wood-heated facility, or whatever.

I would like to make some comments on behalf of three groups this morning. The first group is that of the small businesses in my constituency which have been participating in these two programs. By definition these tend to be small businesses which are Canadian owned and community oriented. They contribute to the minor hockey leagues and the Boy Scouts in their communities. On the other hand there are the oil companies of Canada which tend to be dominated by foreign transnational companies.

It is interesting to note that while the Government is busy providing as much as a few billion dollars each year to the foreign multinational oil companies, the programs which have assisted ordinary Canadians and small businesses in the communities of Canada, namely the Canadian Oil Substitution Program and the Canadian Home Insulation Program, are being terminated. Those programs were costing a few dollars a year and now the Government is going to tell those people that there is nothing for them any longer. However, the Govern-