

on this very important problem, namely that of the conservation of our energy resources.

First of all, may I be allowed to thank the minister for having had the courtesy of sending us a written copy of his statement with supporting documents.

On reading this voluminous document, one may get the impression, offhand, that a minister is introducing an overall policy in a given field. Still, upon closer perusal, one realizes that we are dealing with steps taken after the situation has become intolerable, and therefore in a mood that strikes me as strictly defensive. On reading even the last lines of the minister's statement, one realizes that even at the beginning of this decade, the government had already foreseen in some ways certain problems that would beset us in the field of energy supplies.

That is to say that the policy being introduced today is not an overall energy policy but rather a strictly defensive measure intended to restore some balance which, in the eyes of the minister, is sadly lacking at the present time.

That is why, Madam Speaker, seen in that perspective, we understand readily that the first word to come to this minister's mind is that of conservation. Even if he refuses to admit it openly in his statement, this is merely a contingency plan to meet an emergency.

One must point out, indeed, that on the one hand preventive steps were not taken when the situation allowed, in a relaxed atmosphere, to prevent the situation. On the other hand, one also notes in the minister's statement that he himself recognizes that the government, through its attitude, was wasteful and inefficient. May I quote an excerpt from page 8 of his statement:

The evidence that we have been wasteful and inefficient is persuasive. We all, whether in the private, the industrial, or the governmental sector, have acquired careless habits.

The minister does say "all", and I agree with him. It is true, Madam Speaker, that we must be as objective as possible in our comments, and I want to point out that in the private sector as well as among individuals, Canadians have not been used to be careful with regard to energy resources, since they have actually never been forced to think of mere conservation.

I think that in a serious situation like the one we are facing now, there is one important factor which must be considered if we are to find a real and effective solution. It is that all those concerned, at all levels, be fully aware of the situation, so that they can make a real contribution to the program of conservation outlined by the minister tonight.

Here is an excerpt from page 9:

In the design of the energy conservation policies which I am about to announce, I wish to make clear that these will be permanent policies, not contingency plans enacted in a crisis.

I do not agree on that point, Madam Speaker, because one detects some uncertainty throughout the minister's statement. In the economic context facing this country in the months to come, we are liable to be greatly influenced by the course of world events. On the other hand, the course of world events is entirely related to the energy crisis the world is experiencing, and the minister leaves the impression that all the uncertainty he feels about the future stems from the thorny and explosive oil issue.

### Energy

Oil producing countries have just shown Third-World countries, that is Latin America, Africa and part of Asia, that countries can presently exercise a control over their natural resources and potential and use them as a dreadful weapon against often helplessly interdependent nations.

Concerning the phases of the program as proposed by the minister, I would like to make a few comments. First of all, I was extremely surprised to hear that the first stage of the minister's program will be to put the federal government's own house in order. He goes on to say that it is essential to eliminate waste and inefficiencies within the government's operations.

Now, here is my question: Has the minister just met that aim? Besides, when the minister states that he intends to seek the co-operation of provincial governments in order to set up specific measures with respect to energy conservation, he mentions the following two main steps he intends to take: first, he wants to reduce speed limits on highways. A rather funny step, when experts actually came up with gas saving devices several years ago. But as a matter of fact, oil companies frequently bought those devices in order to make greater profits. And meanwhile, Canadian people were throwing oil products down the drain. Scientists might have devised new kinds of engines with a lower fuel consumption than present automobiles. Besides, most citizens know that several people developed such devices but no attention was paid to them. Madam Speaker, we stand where we are only because the situation was allowed to deteriorate beyond control.

In the area of forestry for example, lumber industries were allowed to turn forests into a havoc. They were granted huge areas almost free of charge, and would make clear fellings with no obligation to retimber. In Quebec, for instance, between 1900 and 1950, huge forests were cut down in that way, and considerable amounts of wood, half-cut trees, left to rot on the space. That was a plain waste. No wonder today we are seriously worried about our timber reserves.

To me, anyway, the minister's policy appears simply and solely as a self-defense attitude in the face of a situation which may well go beyond the government's capacity.

Although the measures advocated might help a little in some cases, the fact is that the situation is highly precarious and we might well be sitting on a time bomb for which the count down has already started suddenly.

Madam Speaker, I think the hon. Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has shown us tonight by his statement that he is very embarrassed and that he has no more confidence than necessary in Canadians as responsible consumers.

● (2120)

[English]

**Mr. Speaker:** I am given to understand, according to the order made in the House earlier this day, that the remainder of this hour, until the ordinary hour of adjournment, will be taken up with questions addressed to the minister.

**Mr. Joe Clark (Rocky Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, my question would be directed to the Minister of the Environment were she in the House. Perhaps her parliamentary