

Merely to go back to the real dollar terms of 1984, there would have had to have been at least a 20 per cent increase. That would have only brought it up to the level of spending of 1984, at a time when, according to the Prime Minister's own statement, the environment is supposed to be the number one priority. If it is the number one priority, can the Minister explain why the cuts, purchasing power as well as absolute cuts, have resulted in an over-all budget cut between 1984 and 1990 of almost half a billion dollars? To be specific, \$491 million have been lost to the environment budget over the life of this Government. I find it incredibly hypocritical that the Government would continue to insist that the environment is a priority when the facts speak otherwise.

I asked a question in the House a few weeks ago. That was dealing only with the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Bouchard), but let us talk about the Ministry of Energy. For all the talk about what Liberals never did, when the last Liberal administration was in power this country had developed a reputation in the area of research and development into the use of alternative forms of energy. Back in 1984 the first thing that the Government did was to eliminate the solar program of the National Research Council. The Government does not believe in alternative energy because the first thing that the Government did was to cut the solar program, and the Minister has stated that that was back in 1984.

• (1240)

Why then in 1988, presumably a period during which the Minister had some influence, were there further cut-backs to renewable resource development in the area of energy? Why does the Budget announce the closing of approximately one dozen regional conservation and renewable energy offices in 1990-91?

When I asked this question in the House, the Minister of Energy (Mr. Epp) laughed. He stated that the reason the Government was no longer funding renewable energy under the Department of Energy was that people were working on making solar panels for their swimming pools. He thought it was a joke that it represented such a small portion, one which, according to the Friends of the Earth, represented \$1 for every \$19 spent on fossil fuel development. Why would the Minister of Energy laugh about the cut-back in the one area of energy development that leaves us some hope for the future?

Supply

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, the same Prime Minister in his Throne Speech referred to air pollution problems, global environmental problems. It is quite easy to refer to the global level, but let us look at what is going on in his own Government, the half billion dollar cuts when inflation is taken into account in the environment area! To what purpose? When we know that \$1 only is spent on renewable energy for every \$19 spent on non-renewable sources, especially fossil fuels which as we know contribute to air pollution!

We know the Montreal agreement aimed at creating a system where renewable energy sources could supply power in order to protect the environment.

How come the Minister of Environment and the Minister of Energy are cutting down in 1988 on research and also on regional offices dealing with renewable energy?

When we see that our future as a country will be based on renewable energy, which at least will clean up the air we breathe and the water we drink! Unless they do not believe in that, but they cannot speak from both sides of their mouths.

When I see the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) travel to Washington, and no doubt tonight he will be referring to the great environment strides that have been made here in Canada—does he feel no embarrassment when receiving that award from a club whose first goal is to prevent governments from going ahead with legislation pertaining to the environment, especially in the area of acid rain? Would it not be better if the Minister asked his friend the Prime Minister to turn down that award, because by accepting it you are extending credibility to an agency aimed at preventing special legislation on acid rain and other international issues.

[*English*]

There are so many other areas that should be addressed in this particular motion. There are so many areas where we should not have confidence in the Government because we have to look at the record of what it has done over the last number of years. However, let us specifically refer to the possibilities that were open to the Minister over the last number of months.

For example, we know that tomorrow—not during the last Liberal mandate, not during the previous Minister's tenure—in the Province of British Columbia the Americans will be moving a barge which is full of spent radioactive waste. It will be moved through the border of Canadian waters down to Washington. We also know that at the moment the federal Government cannot