

RRAP program to rehabilitate older housing, are very sensible from a job and labour intensive point of view.

The Hon. Member for Kamloops-Shuswap (Mr. Riis) mentioned the importance of these programs to small businesses. I would have thought the Tories would have been concerned about small business. They certainly say they are. But when it comes right down to it, they are willing to whack the small businesses in local communities who are providing the kinds of services which home owners need through these two programs. They are not willing to whack the big businesses, the large oil companies and the grants they receive from the National Energy Program.

I think those are my main remarks at this point, Mr. Speaker. These two programs save on heating costs for consumers, they conserve energy and will help to improve our older housing stock. They create jobs, are labour intensive and are supports for small businesses, many of which are close to bankruptcy. We do not feel that this Bill should go forward. We want to have a delay of at least six months, because even if the Hon. Member for Western Arctic does not, we feel some concern for the people in the northern communities who have not had a chance to maximize their use of this program. We also have serious concerns about the economic, social and conservational values of these programs and what would be the result of cutting back on them altogether. We do ask for a six-month delay with the option to go ahead and continue these programs.

[Translation]

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to join other Hon. Members in asking the Government to postpone consideration of this Bill for at least six months. As you know, Mr. Speaker, I have already had an opportunity to speak to this subject, and I said that up to now, all Government spokesmen had agreed these programs were good programs and had been truly beneficial to Canadians.

● (1210)

[English]

I had an opportunity of speaking once on this Bill and I am happy to be able to join with other Members who have called on the Government to accept at least a six-month delay in the implementation of this cut. The record is clear. We have heard Members from all sides of the House, including the Government side, state time and again that these programs have helped considerably in the conservation of energy. It is clear that in the first few years of this program the reduction in energy consumption by Canadians has been dramatic, but we know that we still have a long way to go. In fact, we are among the highest consumers of energy in the world.

The particular concern met by this program was the use of non-renewable energy resources. We have to get off oil if we are to utilize Canada's renewable energy resources. However, at the same time as Government Members stood in the House to say what a great program this was and how it helped Canadians of all income levels but particularly those of lesser

means to develop conservation in their own homes, the Government insists on cutting it off.

There is one fallacy I would like to address which I think has muddied the waters regarding the Government's participation in this debate. Member after Member on the Government side has stood to say that this program was utilized only by wealthy Canadians. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that in my riding of Hamilton East, which happens to be the most industrialized riding in Canada, the average wage is well below what you would consider upper class living in Canada. I represent working people who, in many cases, are struggling to make ends meet. You know that primary industries like steel have been particularly hard hit in the last few years, and many of the workers in my riding were able to take advantage of the financial incentive of these programs to get off oil. So I ask those Government Members who claim that this was a program for the rich to table the figures because they will show that communities which are not seen to be rich communities, like certain remote areas of Newfoundland, were effective users of the program. People in ridings like Hamilton East were able to get a boost of, in some cases, up to \$800 to assist them to get off the non-renewable oil which has been a bane in the world market-place since the mid-1970s. Unfortunately, at the same time the Government is cutting the program off.

What have we seen in its place? We have not seen an over-all global approach to Conservative energy policy. In fact, this legislation is typical of the Government's non-governing approach since September 4. No one would argue that the Conservatives have been given a massive mandate to govern and make tough decisions. But the tough decisions do not involve moving in piecemeal on programs like COSP without offering a panoramic vision of what we want to do to encourage Canadian-based renewable energy resource consumption. In fact, it has been a shooting gallery approach to economic reform. I feel like I am watching the ducks fall one by one and at the same time there is nothing coming up to replace them. Therefore, I would ask the Government to look at a six-month delay of this measure so that it can come back to the House with an over-all strategy for renewable energy consumption and conservation for all Canadians.

I know that Members on the Government side must get tired of hearing their own words thrown back at them, but I refer to the hundreds of promises made by the Conservatives during the election campaign in which they made energy a top priority. There were 39 promises made to the Canadian people dealing with everything from a kind of nirvana-like panacea that they would achieve with the Province of Alberta—and we have seen where that has gone—to support for the development of renewable energy sources for Canadian home owners. But as soon as they were elected we saw that the promises they made to get that little "X" on the ballot meant very little and they are now prepared to cut the very program which they said was of such help to middle and lower-income Canadians.

I frankly cannot help but support the statements made by my colleague from Cochrane-Superior (Mr. Penner) when he said that this Bill discriminates against people in the north,