

Oil Substitution Act

will be a good deal for both Alberta and Newfoundland where they have signed some kind of new agreements. Let us not continue to cut anywhere just for the sake of cutting. We have had enough of that. This is a lifeline into our own families and the use of our own resources. So I strongly recommend that we give this a second thought and support the motion.

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina East): Mr. Speaker, little wonder government Members want to put the question, because Bill C-24, I maintain, is one of the most embarrassing pieces of legislation this Government has introduced.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. de Jong: I hear moans and groans from Members opposite. They maintain that in order to reduce the deficit we must cut back on programs like CHIP and COSP. They say that this is important in order to reduce the deficit and get the country back on its feet. But I suggest that if they would only look at the amount of money the Government is now spending under the ill-conceived National Energy Program, started by the Liberals and which subsidizes imported oil and, through grants and tax breaks, the oil industry, they would see that some 75,000 barrels of oil a day have been saved owing to these two programs at a cost of some \$1.3 billion. Even that figure is misleading because approximately one third comes back to the federal and provincial Governments in the form of taxes. So let us put the figure at around \$900 million and it results in a saving to the consumers of this country of some 75,000 barrels of oil a day. Compare that to the \$17 billion odd committed at the end of 1983 to the National Energy Program which has produced only some 22,000 barrels of oil a day. Where are the economics? The economics are very simple. The Government commitment is to help the oil industry and the oil barons, not the home owners of this country.

Members opposite talk about reducing the deficit. Let me suggest to them that the best way is to tax the oil companies. Stop giving them all the tax breaks, the incentives and the grants. This Government can save the taxpayers of this country hundreds of millions, nay, billions of dollars. But will it reduce the deficit by attacking the almighty oil companies? No, of course not. After all, deals and commitments have been made, and these have to be honoured. But what about the commitments to the home owners of this country, the people who benefited from the off-oil and insulation programs? Well, of course, they can be forgotten, thrown to the wind. So when I hear Conservative Members say that this is necessary in order to cut our deficit, I say B.S. If they were seriously concerned about reducing the deficit they would be reducing the costly parts, the supply parts of the energy program. But no, they are not reducing the supply part. They are not reducing the grants and bail-outs to the nuclear industry which has cost this country billions of dollars over the years. They are not reducing any of the grants and subsidies to the oil companies. No, not at all. But the programs which benefit ordinary Canadian men and women, yes, they will reduce those programs. It is

indeed a sad moment when a Conservative Party which claims to be concerned about conserving is in fact the one that kills the program which attempts to encourage conservation.

What about the future? A report prepared by Canertech in December, 1983, suggested that the level of energy savings in this country over the next 10 years is up to the equivalent of 490,000 barrels of oil per day. This is based on 1983 dollars. That, Mr. Speaker, is the output of three or four mega-tar sands plants. In contrast, they would involve capital costs of about \$60 billion and significant tax on royalty concessions. That is the potential of conservation in this country. We can conserve some 490,000 barrels of oil a day and do it a heck of a lot cheaper than building and financing mega-projects. But there is not a murmur about stopping any of those programs. After all, deals have been made, commitments have been made, and they must be honoured.

Given all this, surely it must make sense to Hon. Members that this Bill in front of us is foolishness. We must begin to recognize that oil is a finite resource. We must begin to conserve. It is in the national interest to do that. Surely it is about time that as a nation we began to recognize that the days of abundant resources are over. Is it not about time that the Conservative Party recognized its own roots as a conserving Party and paid more than just lip service to the slogan of conservation? They must reverse the legislation. But, no, they go in the opposite direction. Instead, the Conservative Members want to make the Canadian public captives of the oil industry. That is the real agenda that is involved here. They do not want Canadians to be self-sufficient. Rather, they want us to be captives of the oil industry in order to provide for the necessary markets to justify all the mega-projects. That is surely the only rational reason one could arrive at after looking at Bill C-24.

• (1550)

As I have pointed out, reducing the deficit is not a valid argument. If the Government were interested in reducing the deficit it could cut back on the subsidies and royalties it has given to the oil industry. Instead, it is eliminating the Canadian Home Insulation Program. I maintain that the Government wants the Canadian public to be captives of the utility and oil companies. That will cause Canadians to spend billions of dollars in the future to increase our energy and oil supplies. These expenditures would not be necessary to that degree if the Government would play a leading role in developing alternative energies and conservation measures.

Canadians are the largest consumers of energy in the world. In part that makes sense because we are a large country, sparsely populated, with a northern climate. There is much that can and should be done to conserve. Government has a responsibility. It must play a leading role in this. If the Government abdicates that responsibility, I predict that in the next election the people of Canada will turf it out because it has not fulfilled its important function of being a leader in this field.