

Energy Conservation

● (1540)

—we hope to provide a strong example to the public and private sectors.

The government now has the chance to set an example. It is not good enough for the government to admonish the public in a fatherly way, to indulge in pious platitudes and set up an energy conservation office with a budget which will permit full-page ads in scores of newspapers and commercials on radio and television. This may lead the public to thinking the government is doing something when in fact it is doing nothing. If the government really wants us to conserve energy, it must act in a variety of areas, including urban transit. For four years we have heard about studies and reports on rapid transit, but it has never gone beyond the study stage.

The government should encourage the use of small cars, the adoption of a national building code, the implementation of rapid transit, and make sure that those who would squander this country's rapidly diminishing energy resources are prevented from doing so. If the government does not act, we shall face a serious situation in a few years. This or some other government will be required to institute rationing, along with all its administrative headaches, for we shall then be compelled to curtail the use of a resource which the government, by indifference and procrastination, has allowed to be squandered over the years.

[*Translation*]

Mr. C.-A. Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to congratulate the sponsor of the motion who blames this government. I quote the motion:

This House regrets the government's failure to carry out an effective energy resource conservation program and, in particular, calls upon the government to answer the criticism by the International Energy Agency that "there appears to be a substantial gap between principle and practice . . ."

On reading this motion, I realize that it only deals with the problem of energy conservation. I feel this motion is much too restricted, thus not realistic at all since the great long-term problem at the present time is the research and development of new energy sources. Indeed, at the present time and in the short term, it is very important to conserve our present resources, hence today's debate, but once again we are forced to hold a closed-circuit. I think that all hon. members in this House will agree on this point. I understand very well the hon. member for Don Valley (Mr. Gillies) who blamed the government on the oil issue in particular.

Canadian resources are fairly restricted at the moment since technicians warn us every day that at the current rate, our oil resources will be exhausted within ten years and according to some, even within five years. Without panicking and anticipating disaster, we must face the situation. Of course, the government must be the first to take steps to reassure the Canadian people, since to govern is to look ahead. But I think all Canadians must show goodwill and do their best. To this end, all Canadians must ask themselves what they can do to better conserve oil energy.

That being said, it rests with the government to act in the interests of every Canadian. It should be pointed out that the oil problem does not exist in Canada only; since it is a depleting resource, it creates the same problems as all other vanishing resources, that is in the years of greatest

[Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands).]

output, everything is fine, everything is wonderful. Every hope is possible since it is felt that there will be no end to that abundance. Consequently, all the activities of our economic life are geared to that wealth, but it is suddenly realized that the resource will dry up one day and sooner than expected. So the situation turns out to be similar to that of Canada, namely a doubtful future.

If we consider oil-producing countries, we find that they share the same concern. All those countries are looking into the energy problem, energy conservation. I do not accept the allegations of the hon. member for Don Valley who said earlier that Canada had oil reserves for 900 to 1,000 years. The greatest experts in that field suggest that the world reserves which might be immediately developed have a 37-year lifetime at the present production rate, while non-recoverable reserves, with present technology, would only extend production possibilities by about ten years.

● (1550)

At the last world conference on energy, the proven oil reserves recoverable in the whole world have been estimated at 91 billion tons. This makes us realize that even the largest producers should consider saving an energy of such short duration.

In Canada, what has been done and what is being done to conserve oil, gas and all other energy resources? We soon realize that it is not by small measures such as reducing speed on highways or avoiding opening doors too much in winter to save heating fuel, that we will solve the problem of quick depletion of our energy resources. It is surely not by increasing prices further to force the consumer to park his car and walk that we will obtain the desired results in conserving energy. Those who have no means of transport other than their automobile to go to work will have to continue driving no matter the costs since it is a *sine qua non* condition to earn their living.

The problem does not exist at the consumer level only. We must first study the problem of small consumers but especially that of bigger ones such as Canadian industries that consume two thirds of our whole energy production. We must find a way to reduce this consumption, either through a marked improvement in the situation or the research for a substitute which will be as efficient for our industries. I am referring to nuclear or even solar energy. Many will jump and shout, as is done too often, that it will cost too much.

Mr. Speaker, I ask those big talkers how much it will cost in Canada in five and at the most ten years to secure another energy source to keep in operation our industries now relying on oil when all our oil resources are gone forever. I say that then it will no longer be a matter of price because it will be too late for Canada.

That is why I say that in addition to programs for the conservation of energy resources, the government must introduce long term programs for the discovery and development of alternative new energy sources to replace oil, gas and even electricity, when these become obsolete.

Faced with these necessities on which the very survival of mankind will depend, we cannot be satisfied with a mere discussion on energy conservation, as proposed in the motion introduced by the hon. member for Don Valley. We