

A number of criticisms have been levelled in the debate today. There have been suggestions that the government has no program, that it has done nothing.

An hon. Member: Right.

Mr. Gillespie: Hon. members will recognize that these are wild exaggerations.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gillespie: They are a sort of rhetorical flourish for the House of Commons that are absolutely without substance.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An hon. Member: That is a shameful exhibition.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Exhortations, that is all.

Mr. Gillespie: Several hon. members have suggested that the International Energy Authority has criticized Canada for an ineffective advertising campaign or because it had created an ineffective board in the energy conservation office.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gillespie: I hear the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) opposite me say "right".

Mr. Baldwin: I never said a word.

Mr. Gillespie: It is on the record.

Mr. Baldwin: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I did not say "right". If I had said anything at all, it would have been "wrong".

Mr. Gillespie: Let me tell you what the report in fact states.

Mr. Gillies: On page 10.

Mr. Gillespie: On page 9. This may come as a surprise to the hon. member for Don Valley (Mr. Gillies) but the report states:

The Energy Conservation Office is clearly a force to be reckoned with. It conducts a public information program of great imagination and drive. Some of its productions could be studied with benefit by other IEA countries. It already has a number of considerable achievements to its credit. For example, it has been influential in securing a requirement for energy accounting to be included in any project involving federal money.

It does not seem to me that hon. members opposite have taken the time to read what the International Energy Authority had to say about the Canadian program.

There have been other suggestions that we were criticized—

Mr. Gillies: I rise on a point of order. I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if the minister would read the last paragraph, which is a summary of the whole report, on page 10, to put this in proper perspective?

Some hon. Members: Order!

Energy Conservation

Mr. Gillespie: Mr. Speaker, I would be very pleased to have a question from the hon. member at the end of my remarks, if he cares to put one to me.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: Read page 10, Alastair.

Mr. Gillespie: Let me just remind hon. members that if they had taken the time and trouble to look at our supplementary estimates—

Mr. Baldwin: We sure looked at them.

Mr. Gillespie: I am delighted to hear you have, because hon. members will find in those supplementary estimates an item of \$2,500,000 plus, for additional advertising to carry the message which has been applauded by the International Energy Authority.

Mr. Baldwin: What Liberal got that contract?

Mr. Gillespie: I want to introduce a balance to this debate. I want to read a paragraph from the report of the International Energy Authority which is critical of the Canadian government.

While there is evidence that certain major sectors of the Canadian economy, which are highly energy intensive, have taken steps to reduce unit energy costs (aluminum is an impressive example), it is doubtful whether Canada's pricing policy is in Canada's best interest in the context of a meaningful conservation program. Even allowing for the arguments associated with comparative advantage, the gap between Canadian energy prices and world prices would appear too big.

● (2120)

That is a very serious observation about which all Canadians and all members of parliament ought to think very hard about. It seems to me that the opposition, and the Conservatives in particular, should think pretty hard about that suggestion. I wonder whether the hon. member for Don Valley, for example, would agree with the suggestion in the report that we should have narrowed the price gap last year. If I recall correctly, it seems to me that the Conservatives opposite were arguing very strenuously that we had raised the price too high, or that we should not have raised it at all. If I remember the debates earlier this year, it seems to me that the NDP took a rather similar view, that we should not have raised the price as high as we did, and that we should not have narrowed the margin as much as we did. Clearly they cannot have it both ways.

I suggest that the government has introduced a judicious balance between the inflationary forces and pressures associated with a higher increase on the one hand, and the need to get the energy conservation message across on the other. Several hon. members suggested that government buildings in Ottawa are beacons at night, and they were right if they were talking about several weeks ago.

An hon. Member: What about External Affairs?

Mr. Gillespie: When I became minister I myself was concerned about some of these buildings. The Lester B. Pearson building has been mentioned as an example. If the hon. member had taken the trouble to drive past the External Affairs buildings, as I did the other night around eleven o'clock, I think he would find that probably less