

Government Orders

We want these clauses debated. We want a public process. That is why we have the parliamentary channel, so that the aspects of this legislation can be fully detailed for the Canadian public. I know there are people from the Canadian Environmental Law Association who are watching us and wondering what is going on. I know the parliamentary secretary is wanting to push this through. We want stronger environmental legislation too, but we are not prepared to give the parliamentary secretary a blank cheque.

These particular motions have important implications for Canada's relations in the world. The international aspects of environmental assessment are crucial. We are coming up to the world summit in Brazil. Canada in my view deserves some of the strong international reputation it has on caring for the rest of the planet. However we have to ensure that the relations Canada has with the rest of the world are not diminished by this legislation.

My colleague for Skeena has given me a copy of his bank of secret documents and I would like to read from that. An issue in December 1989 puts this whole debate in context, because it is the kind of mindset that those of us who are concerned about strong environmental legislation have to struggle against. We are talking about corporations supporting exports, and I cite: "Provision of federal commercial credit to support international trade on the part of Canadian companies through the Export Development Corporation and the Canadian Commercial Corporation is a special case requiring unusual departure from normal assessment procedures. The corporations rarely see an application for a loan early in the planning of a project and in any case have little or no opportunity to influence the project design". We know what is coming. What they are saying is: "Therefore we should have it exempt". They go on to say: "Granting of commercial credit is highly competitive internationally". We can just see the whole mindset behind it: "It is so competitive, therefore, give us a break; don't make us have the same environmental standards".

• (1700)

The corporations note that should they require the usual environmental assessment to be conducted by the

proponent Canadian enterprise or by the client countries before agreeing to grant the loan, Canadian companies would be placed at a distinct competitive disadvantage.

We are not talking about competitiveness here. We are talking about the world's environment. They are whining and bleeding about competitiveness. This is why it is important that this legislation is debated fully and that this kind of loophole is filled.

Of course I am not in favour of Canadian loss of exports. I am a strong Canadian. I want Canada to be strong economically, but I do not want that to occur at the expense of the world environment. That kind of rationale is just not acceptable.

I note further on in this document—and this is why I want to say that there is balance within the bureaucracy and this is where we should be giving them some credit—that it says: "The government in pursuing environmentally sustainable development domestically and internationally seeks to build a framework of appropriate understanding, arrangements and obligations with others".

The application of Canadian environmental assessment procedures and activities outside Canada should avoid creating unfortunate precedents of extra-territoriality, be sensitive to local conditions and policies and to agreed international institutions and procedures.

It should not detract from Canada's environmental stature internationally in co-operation with the other countries. That is what these motions are trying to achieve. I think that oftentimes the search for perfection is the enemy of the good, and I learned that phrase from the Constitution committee. We cannot achieve perfection, even on environmental legislation, but we have to make sure that all loopholes acquired by this bill are filled to the best of our ability. We are not seeking perfection. We are not being obstructionists. We are trying to make this bill the best possible so that we can support it.

Mr. Caccia: Mr. Speaker, my point of order is intended to be helpful. On page X of the Order Paper, the description of the amendment presently under debate does not seem to respond with the text of the bill being amended.