

Government Orders

cratically speaking, we are going to stay here and we will ask to have 25 per cent of what is necessary for us because we give 25 per cent of our revenues to Canada.

Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, in the region I come from in metro Toronto we look at natural resources in terms of attachment because we have so few of them.

It is interesting to note that in many municipalities we have a department of urban forestry. We do have a regional conservation authority of great significance. We have citizens' participation and action in the cleaning up of our rivers. In other words, we have an attachment to water, soil and the natural resources probably because we are urban Canadians.

We do not have obsessions about jurisdiction. We think that the few trees and the few rivers we have belong to us as municipal dwellers, as provincial dwellers and as Canadians as a whole. However, we have in common with everybody across the country the preoccupation about the future of these resources. This is what my intervention will focus on this afternoon.

• (1700)

I congratulate the minister for introducing this important bill. I praise her for including a reference to sustainable development in clause 6(d) under the powers, duties and functions of the minister.

I would urge the minister to consider a better treatment of the concept of sustainable development. In this bill it comes after the minister's duty of co-ordinating, promoting and recommending certain policies with respect to natural resources and explosives. It comes after assisting in the development and promotion of Canadian scientific and technological capabilities. It comes after participating in the development and application of codes and standards. It finally appears as the fourth item. It is in clause 6(d) in having regard to the integrated management of Canada's natural resources. That is where we find sustainable development.

I urge the minister, the parliamentary secretary and the committee to take a page from Bill C-46, the bill to establish the Department of Industry which we debated yesterday. Look at clause 5 of that bill where the concept of sustainable development is outlined in the first part under the powers exercised by the minister. It says that the minister shall exercise the powers and perform the duties and functions in a manner that will promote sustainable development. It comes as the number one overall consideration.

It would make sense because in clause 2 of Bill C-48 there is a very good definition of sustainable development. Actually, it is the word for word definition given in the 1987 Brundtland report. We applaud the minister and the government for having done so. This definition has become the turning point in our way

of thinking, in our way of placing the environment and the economy in a new context.

Therefore it would make sense that in a bill of such importance relating to our natural resources that sustainable development would not rank as an afterthought in the fourth clause dealing with the powers of the minister. It should be elevated to the first and stand on its own without any reference to words like integrated management, the meaning of which we really do not know. There is no definition of integrated management in clause 2 but there is a definition of sustainable development. In that sense it is hoped that a suitable amendment will be moved in committee and the matter resolved along these lines.

What does sustainable development mean? It is important that we enter into this debate with some principles on what will be guiding future ministers and officials over the next 10 or 20 years when they apply this legislation.

Reduced to its basic elements, sustainable development is a concept that stresses the importance of integrating the economy with the environment. It means that when we pursue growth, we pursue it with environmental, economic, social and even cultural concerns in mind. That is what sustainable development is intended to imply.

• (1705)

From that general concept we would want to know what are the principles which come under that general heading. How should we be guided in the management of our resources when we say: "We accept the concept of sustainable development; it is in the act. We have a general definition. Now what does it really mean? Could you tell us?"

In search of these elements the first principle would be to integrate the economy with the environment and make those goals convergent rather than in conflict. They can be convergent and mutually reinforcing rather than in conflict.

Also, it would require applying accounting practices that would indicate to the nation that when we cut down a forest or when we fish, in other words when we reduce our stock of natural resources, that shows up in our national accounts as a loss and not just as a revenue. While there is definitely a revenue when a forest is cut down, that asset is gone for the next 95 or 110 years. Therefore, we must know of the loss in our national accounting of that asset. This form of accounting is badly needed.

Another principle that could be adopted is to ensure that the stock of natural resources is not drawn down from the present acceptable and desirable levels. The stock of our natural resources should not only be maintained but also improved. Its quality should also be improved wherever possible. This is not just for us and our requirements but for future generations. It is this preoccupation with the long term, this preoccupation with the years 2050 or 3000 which makes the concept of sustainable