

Government Orders

The Battlefords—Meadow Lake, one is proposed by the Minister of the Environment and one by the Liberal side.

The question is, how do we put into the legislation the best possible, the most appropriate, the most open process to review the legislation itself?

When we debated the Canadian Environmental Protection Act some years ago in committee, the government of the day, which is the same government as today, did accede to pressures and the interventions of various participants. Included in that, I believe, was the distinguished member for York East who was a member of the committee and made a substantial contribution at that time to include in the Canadian Environmental Protection Act a review process which is the same as we are proposing here for this particular legislation, namely Bill C-13.

We are proposing something that exists in another statute. The idea is to set into motion a review of the legislation after five years. I believe all three sides agree on this. However, there is a difference in the approach in that we propose a review which is open and public. The proposal of the Minister of the Environment, which is the object of Motion No. 34, is very narrow I would say, because the minister would consult those whom the minister of the day considers appropriate. That could be a very narrow, limited consultation process and not a very open one.

If I understand the NDP proposal, it is also not as open as we are proposing. I have taken a careful look at the amendment proposed in Motion No. 32.

Therefore, what I am saying is that of the three options before us, it seems to me that the Liberal option is the one that will allow an established committee of the House of Commons or an established committee of both Houses of Parliament to hold public hearings so as to get the input from the field, from the affected sectors, from the public at large, as to the adequacy and the desirable changes and other aspects of the bill when it has reached the age of five.

• (1040)

In essence, that is what we are saying. There is not much that I can add except to stress the fact that public participation in environmental matters is a principle to

which all three parties subscribe. It is my hope that on the government side there will be a favourable attitude to a proposal for a review of the legislation that does put emphasis on the role of the public five years from now when this legislation will inevitably come under scrutiny.

Mr. Dennis Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up on what my colleague from Davenport said. I think that his approach is correct when he talks about using a committee of both houses and having more of the public at large involved.

I want to come at it from that sector of our community that is so important to making the success of that and that is the business community. We have a shifting attitude today from the business community in this country toward the environment, whereas three, four or five years ago, there tended to be an attitude where business and the environmental movement tended to operate in isolation.

Increasingly, we see a situation where the business community is taking a more proactive role in all areas of the environment. We in this House do not in any way, shape or form want this review process to move that relationship backward. If we can have a situation which promotes more business participation and involvement in the actual process of this bill, then I think we are going to create a lot more good will.

I keep referring to this organization. I do not believe we are utilizing all the resources of this national round table on the environment as much as we should. They have experts involved. It is a public-private sector organization which advises this Parliament. They have been able to bring together leaders from all aspects of the community and the business community. They keep stressing in their communication all the work that they do, that as we pull the leaders of the business community into this process, it has not only has a national effect, but most of these organizations have international linkages. Those international linkages are so important in getting a common environmental review assessment process going.

I support my colleague from Davenport and his motion. Any time we can have a more open, public at large participation through the committee process, it is only going to serve to refine the bill even more.