

Government Orders

service. That was not always the case. Sometimes it was better in the province.

So it can work in the environment. Sometimes you can have a province where the government is quite frankly bad on the environment as was the previous Devine government in Saskatchewan over the Rafferty—Alameda. The federal government was being pressed to act. That is not a bad thing and can be a good thing.

The hon. member brought up another point from the Bloc Quebecois on which I want to comment. He said that perhaps we should be careful about the constitutional aspects of the environment because the debate is ongoing. There are constitutional negotiations going on and in the next few months the government may end up giving more power to the provinces, on the environment, specifically to Quebec. I think that is a good point. The House should think about that in this debate. We may be passing a bill under which, if we give a lot of power on environment to the provinces, as a result of the constitutional discussions, we could be acting rather uselessly. It is something to look for.

My impression of the Beaudoin—Dobbie committee was that Canadians, including Quebecers, by and large wanted the federal government to control the environment. They saw a real role for the federal government in the environment. They saw shared power in certain areas. I say this to the hon. member while I have the floor on this subject. When speaking of the issue of the development of James Bay, I had a prominent member of the Parti Quebecois tell me: “Don’t worry. After independence we won’t have any problems with the Indians in northern Quebec. We will just buy it. We will give them \$1 billion and we will make a deal”. I thought: “Boy, are you ever mistaken. I think you are living in another world”.

The point I make is that even after independence and I would say this if, God help us, if Quebec did become independent, exercise its rights of self-determination, as I believe it had, if it did that Quebec would still have the same problems. It would have the problem of a minority language and the minority language would be English, just like we have the “problem” in Canada of the minority language French. It would have the problem of

native people in northern Quebec who would, I am afraid, if Quebec were to go ahead against the wishes of the native people on the development of a new James Bay project, declare their independence and call upon Canada to send the Canadian army to help them.

Those are my worst fears. We have to be very careful of that situation. The member laughs but one could see the development of that situation down the road as the worst case scenario.

I say to the hon. member that I think the Quebec record on the environment is as good as any other province in this country and the Quebec record on native people, contrary to what other people say, is as good as or even better in some aspects as other provinces in this country.

The hon. member is correct in identifying the environment as important in the constitutional aspect. It is painfully obvious to all of us that the environment, if anything, is an international matter. While we Canadians play the potentially deadly game of whether we should have an independent Quebec or not, the environment problem is not going to go away and independence or sovereignty for Quebec is not going to solve for the environmental problems.

My suggestion is that really smart people would look upon the environment as an interrelated problem of international, national, provincial, and local governments and that we should focus on which jurisdiction in any one area could do the job the best, who could govern it the best so that we could have true sustainable development.

That is the secret. Sometimes it will be overlapping jurisdiction. When we deal with an environmental bill we should look upon it as very important that it is a federal system where we will have federal and provincial jurisdiction.

I will leave you with this thought. Perhaps the hon. member from the Bloc Quebecois and his colleagues could ponder this. We have not done very badly in the environment in Canada, have we? Have we not a beautiful environment in this country? We have it through the co-operation of Quebecers and people from other provinces such as my province of British Columbia. Perhaps we should work to keep that.