

Government Orders

step of the way. They want a bill that will be mandatory, open to the public, in which there will be an opportunity for them to participate in that review and to ensure that the environment is protected.

This bill allows discretion, particularly by the government and by the ministers. It does not even call or allow for environmental review of government policy. Government policy is exempt. The NDP report *Towards a Sustainable Future* talked about an environmental auditor who could independently review government operations and policies. That is what is necessary.

When the land commission in B.C. was first established under the then premier, the member from Esquimalt, its hallmark was that it was an independent land commission, at arm's length from the government, which had authority to act in the interest of the community. Everyone knows what the Socreds did. We also know that in B.C. the Socreds and the Tories are the same people. We have another example here of where people are determined not to have an arm's length body to protect the environment and the interests of the Canadian public.

In closing, I wonder what is the sudden reason for the change in process that the government has brought in. A process was set up where it was going to review this legislation before it was brought back to the House so that some of the major changes that everyone agrees must be made could be made and it could be redrafted before it came back. Now it has been dispensed with. People want effective environmental legislation, but they do not want it done so quickly that it is ineffective.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I am glad I was in the House to listen to the speech from the last hon. member who was very anxious in laying blame on all the other villains and perpetrators of environmental damage, particularly in other parties.

It brought to mind some history. It is too bad he is not prepared to stay to listen to it. About 20 years ago I was the chairman of the environmental council in Manitoba, the first time it was established. The issue at that time was a major hydro project that was being initiated by the then Schreyer government which carried the label: New Democratic Party.

Mr. Green, its the minister of natural resources, would meet with us on a periodic basis, bang the desk, take his shoe off, throw it at people, scream, yell, jump, and say:

"By God, the progress of Manitoba was not going to be stopped by a bunch of environmentalists who were going to get in the way of this major project."

I spent almost three years as chairman of that council before I was elected to the Manitoba legislature. I can probably say one of the reasons I got elected was my stand against the New Democratic Party government initiative in flooding something like 300,000 to 400,000 acres of northern Manitoba waterways, displacing thousands of native people and aboriginals in Manitoba and, to this day, not acknowledging that any compensation should be paid.

I can recall Mr. Green, who I know is carried as one of the great heroes, a paragon of New Democratic representatives at the time, was the one who said that by God environmental assessment was something that would happen over his dead body.

I say this simply to remind my hon. friends to the left that it is time that self-righteousness gave way to some self-consciousness and recognition that this entire community and all parties are culpable and that nobody can escape some serious responsibility for having made the wrong decisions in the past.

Unfortunately 20 years later we are making the same mistakes. It seems that we have not learned an awful lot in those 20 years. We are now using the language of environmental accountability and responsibility, but there is still a basic reservation or a lack of willingness to understand just how crucial it is that we change the ethic of our time. It is understandable—and you, Mr. Speaker, in particular would understand it, coming from the province of Alberta—coming as we do from western provinces where for a long period of time the initiation of major capital projects was our lifeblood. Hydro projects, pulp and paper projects and the development of our natural resources, in the opening of the west those were considered to be good things, not bad things. Over time we are learning that what was a good thing also carries with it very bad consequences.

• (1620)

I want to make the case that I think my colleagues up to now have done a superb job in pointing out the serious gaps in this legislation. I also want to say that this will never work. Environmental assessment will never work until we find a way of balancing those fundamental