

Supply

ical proposals, local and municipal, I think there are opportunities for individuals, clubs and groups to participate in buying the lands and resources—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member but his time has expired.

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Madam Speaker, we on this side of the House want to congratulate the member for Skeena for his motion. We support it, of course, from this side of the House. At the same time, I cannot help expressing a sense of being stunned, shocked or dismayed by the weakness of the minister's speech today and his reluctance to give a commitment to a motion which is put forward in an honest manner which asks for a commitment by the government to move toward the year 2000 in order to complete the national park system, land and marine, and to achieve or to protect at least 12 per cent of land and the marine zones.

• (1250)

I ask myself whether the Minister of the Environment is ill-advised or is he weak or is he insecure that he cannot get up in the House today and give a more positive speech to Canadians on this matter.

What is troubling him? Is he troubled perhaps by the fact that by the year 2000 he might achieve 11.2 per cent and, therefore, be reproached for that by parliamentarians and politicians at that time? Or is he troubled by the fact that he might overshoot the target and deliver 13 per cent and he would then be embarrassed by the applause? I do not know. I am puzzled by this kind of weak attitude. Or are we facing a classic example of leadership by rhetoric, in which case the member for Skeena has placed before us a fantastic motion that is putting to the test the political will of this weak, tired, unimaginative government. Maybe that is what is happening today in this House to the embarrassment of the Tory backbenchers who themselves could not believe their ears half an hour ago when the minister was taking such a weak political stance on such a fundamental matter.

The minister and his government have endorsed the Brundtland report. The Prime Minister spoke in support of it at the United Nations in September 1988. The Prime Minister went to the Hague in March 1989 and he has again indicated the support and the endorsement of

this government, the Canadian government, which includes everybody, for the Brundtland report which contains this specific proposal. Now, when it comes to the first crunch, so to speak, to the test of truth, to the litmus test perhaps, here we find the minister getting up and saying, "Well, you know, we don't want to be bound by percentages. We somehow would like to be flexible. Therefore we have to vote against this motion because it could be interpreted as a motion of non-confidence in this government." What nonsense!

The member for Skeena made it quite clear in his interventions that this is not a motion of non-confidence. The member for Skeena has made it quite clear that he is referring, in his motion, to the Brundtland report and here, all of a sudden, we have a withdrawal. I ask, where is the commitment on the government benches to the Brundtland report when it comes to cutting down CO₂ pollution? What will they say then? "Oh well, you know it is something that we cannot precisely tackle for you. It is too complex a matter." Sure it is because if they fail on a matter that is fairly straightforward as the question of achieving a certain percentage to be set aside for national parks, then we can expect attitudes like that too.

This is a political debacle for the Conservative Party to come into the House today and make a statement of such a nature which indicates that really, they support with words, with rhetoric, with declarations, particularly abroad. They are very good at that, in making grand statements. When it comes to the heart of the matter at home, then they withdraw with some kind of weak excuses. What a sham!

I am glad to say on behalf of the Liberal Party of Canada that in the last election we did have a plank—and it was plank number one—a statement to the effect that we will expand, if elected to power, Canada's national park system. I am glad also to say that we did indicate directly in reply to a questionnaire that was sent to the Liberal Party of Canada during the election that we would complete this system by the year 2000. So we made, during the election, a general statement which was in the pamphlets which all of us distributed door-to-door and then a very specific statement as well by way of a communication to the Canadian Parks and Wilderness