

Environment

in adding another largely redundant bureaucracy. Such an action in these times of restraint and difficult economic realities would be irresponsible. In terms of real progress toward a cleaner environment, the establishment of the institute would be far more symbolic than real.

As I said earlier, research is necessary to enhance our knowledge of the environment. In the meantime, however, we must have mechanisms, not simply to clean up after ourselves, although those are necessary, but to prevent the introduction of harmful substances or to restrict potentially harmful activities.

In this respect, the Environmental Contaminants Act, passed by this House in 1975, is one of the world's leading pieces of legislation. It establishes the precedent that chemical or other potential contaminants must be approved for use before they can be introduced into processes through which they might enter the environment. I believe this to be an extremely important approach and one that reflects the concern of this government for our environmental well-being. No longer is it enough that a new chemical may make an industrial process cheaper or more efficient. Environmental destruction is not an acceptable price for higher profits.

Finally, in the area of potentially damaging activities, the government has also taken an important step through the establishment of the environmental assessment review process. The objective of the process is to determine the impact of federal projects before they are carried out rather than having to deal with the impact after the fact. Although the actual conduct of the process is still being refined, it is working, and there are now 22 separate projects under review.

In conclusion let me say that these are significant measures. More important still, they are positive action designed to prevent and solve problems—real problems. I do not think yet another institution will increase our ability to do that.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, it is good to have the Angus MacLean motion before us again, and I congratulate the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) on giving notice of it so we could have this discussion.

As the member who moved the motion indicated, I made a comment to him just before he commenced in which I indicated the terms in which I see the resolution, but it is obvious that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Robinson) did not see it at all in those terms.

My friend across the way made the surprising statement that we do not need this motion because everything it calls for is being done. How could my friend, a reasonable, decent, and honest fellow, make a statement like that? I think the reason he did it was that he thought in terms of the environment, as relating only to things like clean air, clean water and so on, and because he can claim the government has a department working on these things he says the same things are already being done, so we are on the road.

[Mr. Robinson.]

When I look at this motion it seems to me that what is being called for in the title "An Institute of Human Environmental Studies" is a body that will consider everything which relates to the human condition. Most of the bodies we have for studying things are cast in economic terms. We have the Economic Council of Canada, the Conference Board in Canada, and the C. D. Howe Research Institute. Most of these bodies make assessments and report to parliament or the government in economic terms. It would be a really good idea to parallel these bodies with this kind of institute that would be concerned about everything which affects human beings.

As the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton has pointed out, this would include not only clean air and clean water, but decisions as to the sizes of our cities, the spaces between our cities and towns, green belts, and all of that kind of thing. I suggest it includes matters having to do with conditions under which people live at various ages of their lives, what we do about education, about recreation for people during their working years and, as well, includes the question of whether older people should be maintained in their own homes or should be maintained in institutions of various kinds. This would include the effect on life of things that have to do with social security, and mental health comes into it, as well as the effect on our society of more crime than is tolerable, and so on. It literally affects everything. As I say, the thing I like about this motion is that very universality I see in it.

Like others, I recall very well speeches made by Angus MacLean when he was the member in this House for Malpeque, particularly his very strong presentation of the case for small being beautiful. I am glad, as I say, that the motion is before us again. I think the House might consider supporting it in one way or another because it seems to me what it seeks is for the government, parliament, and people in public life to think not only in cold, crass, materialistic, economic terms, but to think in human terms, and in terms of what everything that touches our lives can do to advance the human condition. That is our purpose surely in this life and in this country, not just to have a country that one can boast of as being prosperous and able to solve its economic problems. Surely what we want is a society that is a good place for human beings. For that reason I am very happy to join with the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton in supporting once again the Angus MacLean motion.

Mr. Maurice Harquail (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State for Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the motion put before the House by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) concerns an issue which is both comprehensive and critical. If my memory serves me correctly, we have had a similar type of motion before the House on more than one occasion. At least in the time I have been here I remember participating in a debate on a private member's motion regarding the same suggestion being put forward here this afternoon. I cannot help but mention the sad position taken by members of the Conservative party, in that they speak on the one hand about too many Crown corporations, suggesting that we must cut back, conserve and be conservative, yet on the other they