

Government Orders

The Minister of Transport's answer was flat and did not take into account the concerns expressed by the people. Petitions are useless since governments pay little attention to such demands.

This is highly regrettable and it aggrieves the people. On the other hand, while not signing any petitions, lobbies are paid much more attention to by ministers. The Liberals opposite are particularly lax in that area. Recent decisions clearly show that lobbyist and minister go hand in hand, while petitions amount to nothing.

This concludes my remarks on the petition aspect of the bill. Let us now turn to the other key element, namely the development and tabling of sustainable development strategies by the departments.

I immediately wonder about the two year time limit for tabling these strategies. What will the commissioner do during those two years, since his job is to make inquiries and monitor the implementation of departmental action plans and report annually on the extent to which objectives were met? What is the commissioner going to do for two years? This measure means that, to all intents and purposes, he or she will have nothing to audit for three years, assuming that the initial report will be on the first year the strategies are implemented.

• (1300)

Let us now examine these sustainable development strategies. First of all, it needs to be pointed out that they replace the green plan, that famous green plan which held such promise, but has passed on after years of neglect by the government.

We in the Bloc see this new federal government approach as another serious threat of encroachment and intrusion into provincial areas of jurisdiction. This concept of sustainable development which the federal departments are to develop concretely into plans raises some legitimate concerns. Does not sustainable development concern resources, an area of provincial jurisdiction?

Recent federal government actions, including the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, as well as the Liberals' ultra-centralist intent in the report on the CEPA, are clear evidence to us of this tendency to interfere.

The federal government, under the guise of ecologizing the operations of each department, is actually implementing an overall result-oriented sustainable development strategy. On first view, one might believe this to be an initiative with exclusively federal effects, but when the description and orientations of this initiative are examined, it can be seen that it will be able to influence all of the provincial governments directly.

This initiative goes much further. By introducing sustainable development, each department has an opportunity to take responsibility for certain areas under federal jurisdiction. To

achieve the desired results, the federal government has identified certain objectives for sustainable development which it intends to promote. For instance, it wants to ensure that the development of renewable and non-renewable resources, many of which, I may remind you, are exclusively under provincial jurisdiction, is sustainable.

Even if the provinces play a major role in achieving these objectives, the federal government has clearly indicated that it will emphasize communications and consultations with individuals and the private sector. It has only hinted at the possibility of joint management agreements with the provinces and aboriginal communities.

This approach, including implementation of the concept of sustainable development and an emphasis on relations with individuals and the private sector, may be seen as a threat to the provinces. A very subtle threat, which nevertheless reveals the cavalier approach of a federal government that uses this diversion to satisfy its hunger for centralism. In fact, the federal government increasingly resorts to this kind of strategy to get around the provinces and encroach on a number of areas.

As far as the environment is concerned, this approach is both unfortunate and dangerous. The federal government's record is not outstanding in this respect, and centralism does not tend to produce quick results where they are needed. We must not forget that the environment is out there, not in the offices of Ottawa's bureaucrats.

We think that before making any claims that they can do a better job, federal departments should start by complying with provincial legislation. The environment is one area where the provinces played a very active role well before the federal government did so. In fact, the Constitution confers on them a role that is more important than that of the federal government which, over the years, has used and abused its spending power in provincial jurisdictions. Ever since the federal government broke this delicate balance in the middle of the eighties, the result has been overlapping jurisdictions, conflicting objectives and costly duplication.

Fortunately, in Quebec, on October 30, Quebecers will decide to make their own country. Our environment will no longer be at the mercy of the federal government and will be able to breathe easier.

[English]

Mr. Bill Gilmour (Comox—Alberni, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, before I get into talking about the bill I would like to make a few comments about the previous speaker, my colleague from the Bloc.

I find it most interesting that the Bloc would want the federal government to bow out of environment on the federal arena. However it is quite prepared to accept Canadian tax dollars to raise the *Irving Whale*. This is part of the double message, the double standard. I expect it is some of the nonsense that we will