

Government Orders

The reason I say that is that there will no longer in my view be good reason for Canadians of good faith, aboriginal, environmental, conservation, engineering oriented or whatever to participate in a process where they know an anti-democratic and undemocratic end awaits them. In that process before the expert advice was ever made public so that the public could reflect upon it, two ministers, neither of whom claimed any engineering expertise, any hydrological expertise, any wildlife conservation expertise, any fisheries expertise, any aboriginal rights expertise, any archaeological expertise, no expertise at all, other than straight political chicanery, decided against the expert advice, five to one, of professional engineers, professional experts who heard hundreds of hours of evidence.

They reviewed over 126 written submissions, made probably one of the most difficult decisions of conscience they could possibly make in their own home province, which was to decommission a dam that had cost almost \$500 million, had been to the highest court in Canada, had existed illegally contrary to the basic fundamental moral and legal tenets of that province and this country since its inception and went against it.

I predict, regrettably, that the Cree and others in Quebec will probably withdraw from the environmental assessment process of the Grande Baleine. I predict that many groups will withdraw should an EARP now proceed in relation to Kemano II in British Columbia. I suspect that the Tetzlaff brothers in the province of Saskatchewan are as appalled as anyone in this country that it could happen again in another province by the same ministers in relation to the same issues.

It is absolutely appalling on the brink of the earth summit in Rio that a minister from this country, who is going to be Canada's lead minister in Rio, would have taken such an anti-democratic, anti-environmental view of a project. The panelists made it absolutely clear that the economic benefits of the Oldman River dam were massively outweighed by the negative implications on aboriginal people, the Peigan people.

Milton Born with a Tooth was here speaking yesterday about his feelings on this issue. I can understand the emotional tenor that he brings to this debate after being so callously treated by the justice system and by the ministers responsible.

The issue is one of credibility of this institution if this institution is going to pass into law, new law to go beyond the 1984 cabinet guidelines order and expect Canadians in good faith to enter a process of compromise, to enter a process of assessment, to appear before an expert panel that would weigh as it did in this case the economic benefits for irrigation, for farmers in southern Alberta and for communities such as the Lethbridge water district and others in southern Alberta.

They weighed that, the cost of the dam, the cost of decommissioning against the phenomenal dangers of mercury poisoning for the fish in three river systems as a result of the impoundment of the water. All of the negative impacts on forest ecology, sacred sites, archaeological sites were weighed. They came to one principled conclusion because 22 of their 23 recommendations dealt with mitigation issues that have never been dealt with by Alberta, and I predict never will be.

They have never been dealt with by Canada, and I predict never will be. Regrettably, the decision made by the Minister of Transport and the Minister of the Environment yesterday will stand as the darkest, blackest, sleaziest decision that was ever made on an environmental issue by a panel.

Therefore on Bill C-59, I am honoured that we finally have an opportunity to do this honourable thing today, prior to the referendum time running out with the Haida in terms of Gwaii Haanas and also for Canada's largest national park, Wood Buffalo National Park, now that logging has halted and the rights of the First Nations, the aboriginal people, the Cree are recognized and passed in this legislation.

[Translation]

Mr. François Gérin (Mégantic—Compton—Stansstead): Madam Speaker, I would like to start by congratulating the hon. member on having convinced the government to take this new initiative in his riding, which is not easy. In fact, we as members from Quebec approve of this government initiative, which was a joint effort.

I would also like to take this opportunity, at a time when we are right in the middle of a referendum debate, to make certain points and ask the hon. member to comment and perhaps explain his party's position on the points I intend to raise, including the fact that Quebec has far fewer national parks than the rest of Canada.