

chemical products which come on the market every year. One thing I think we will see over the next few weeks is the very serious, very reasonable and very constructive work being done under the direction of the Minister to try to bring some reason to this mish-mash we inherited. I think every one of us could understand how it might happen, but the fact is that it is not adequate for today's technology or the conditions under which we have to operate. In bringing together and rationalizing the management and control of toxics in the environment, the Minister will have provided the kind of service we need from our environmental controls to look after the problems we will inevitably have.

I spent this morning speaking to two very significant groups from Ontario who were having a joint annual meeting under the umbrella of a larger federal organization to consider their activities in the management of the environment. They dealt particularly with air and water. Our discussion was good and we had an opportunity to consider what the federal Government was doing, the very real and concrete actions taken at the federal level concerning money, organization and regulations where appropriate and the co-operation we were trying to bring forward with groups like themselves, including such industries as the automobile industry. There is a group called PACE which deals with environmental problems in the oil industry. All these groups are starting to get a sense of the way we can work together because of the shared responsibilities we have.

I hope that in future opposition Members will view their responsibility in a serious, constructive and responsible way. I hope they are going to be able to take advantage of the emotional elements which surround these issues. I hope they will be able to take advantage of the legitimate fear which is raised in the minds of people about these substances. I wondered several days ago how much of an issue polychlorinated biphenyls, given the way we have to say it, would become. They would still be the same problem but one that would be much less attractive politically, because it is kind of catchy. One of the scientific experts who has been following this issue indicated that a lot of people, myself included, without being able to get into some of the substance of the technical aspects, get confused when they talk about dioxins. How are people to know what the relative dangers are unless there is a responsible discussion instead of trying to score political points and advance notions which could create almost as many problems as they solve? We look forward to getting that from the Opposition. I think it would serve Canadian interests and I look forward to it in the future.

Mr. Cassidy: Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the tone of the Hon. Member's contribution to this debate. He put some blame on the previous Liberal Government and its failure to take appropriate action at the appropriate time. But what bothers me is that he comes from a Party which has held office in the Province of Ontario for many years.

Mr. Lewis: And many more, too.

Supply

Mr. Cassidy: That may be; we will have to see on May 2. At the rate they are going, they may disappear below the floor before May 2.

I was in the Ontario Legislature in 1979 when we passed the Hazardous Products Act. It was called the spills Bill and it provided that the transporter of hazardous and toxic substances would be liable for any damages caused by those substances if there was a spill. It was a good piece of legislation and we laboured on it long and hard. My colleague, Marion Bryden, in particular worked very hard to get that Bill adopted. However, while the Hon. Member's tone is very positive, one has to look at the record. His leader is going to campaign with the Premier of Ontario in three or four days and say what a great guy the Premier is and what a great Party the Progressive Conservative Party is. That Bill, which would have in fact given some specific remedy against the spill in Kenora this week, has not been proclaimed for six years. That is a real dereliction as far as Conservatives are concerned. You cannot go with them when you try to win elections and then distance yourself by saying, "We have a great record and look at the record that they have". I think that is shoddy politics.

● (1720)

Mr. Gurbini: Mr. Speaker, I am never going to be able to match the Member's passion.

Mr. Blaikie: That is true.

Mr. Gurbini: Just wait a minute, let us put this in context. The question is irrelevant in this case because that company has accepted liability.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The Hon. Member for Birds Nest. I mean the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Birds Hill (Mr. Blaikie).

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I will refrain from commenting on your obvious unintentional error.

I would like to comment on what the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Gurbini) had to say. He expounded on the fact that we do not know enough about polychlorinated biphenyls. Would he now answer for the Minister and tell us whether the Department of the Environment and the Minister intend to stand by the decision to cancel the study asked for by the Ontario Government into the assessment of PCBs, which cancellation was a result of the announced cuts in the environmental secretariat under the NRC in the November 8 statement?

In the interest of being fair, would he take some time to look at the development of the debate as it began last week after the PCB spill? He made some charges with respect to people being emotional, taking advantage of fear, et cetera. If he refers back to the first question which I asked of the Minister of Transport (Mr. Mazankowski) he will notice that the question was asked in a very straightforward and calm way. I asked him about a moratorium in my first question.