

Government Orders

amount of taxpayers' money going into it, and there is no test of sustainability in either one of those projects.

I would like her comments on particularly the Hibernia project involving billions, of taxpayers' dollars. We know who pays the majority of the taxes in this country. It is ordinary Canadians, to a far greater degree than large corporations. I would like her response to those two projects, Hibernia and Point Aconi.

Mrs. Campbell (South West Nova): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the member's question. I will say this about Hibernia: we in the east do not get too many major projects. This is one of them. Oil and gas in the east is perhaps one of the future areas of development, particularly if we relate it to the fisheries, what is happening on the east coast, and this government's attitude toward the fisheries.

In oil and gas there have been effective actions on the environment on Georges Bank. When it wanted to put an oil rig there or go out to look for development, the people in the area rejected it. The fishermen rejected it. The citizens in the southern end that I represent did such a fine job of opposing it that there were no rigs on Georges Bank.

• (1550)

There have been studies on Hibernia. I am not as close to Hibernia as I am to Sable Island or to Georges Bank.

If there are people in Newfoundland who are satisfied with the process that was used on Hibernia, and the government is satisfied with the process, then I cannot say—and I have not seen too many people in the east opposed to the process used on Hibernia, and I say that quite honestly—they have weighed the environmental consequences of the development of Hibernia.

I might have a different view from some of the people who are going ahead with it. I also know that at one time the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources was doing some of the exploration for oil and gas on the east coast. There were studies done about what was to be done in the event of a crisis in the water in the future: who was to pay the costs, and things like that. I know that there was a very intensive study done. I know that every

segment of industry on the east coast took part as far as Hibernia was concerned.

I can agree that as a federal government or a provincial government we do not make people aware enough of just what is going to happen and whether or not our decisions are based on a full evaluation of the consequences. I say this because people do look at the jobs that can be created. That is the present day concern. The review process, the safeguards, and the safety nets were not considered in the process before.

As far as some of the fines and the penalties that were brought in for any sort of destruction of the environment by oil companies are concerned, they have been set in the process. Maybe after five or six years we should be looking at some of it in terms of the destructiveness of such a project.

I certainly am well aware that the Canadian public is never as aware as it should be until after the fact. I do not know if there is not a role in here for doing this. I welcome in this act the follow-up to anything that has been reviewed and anything the mediator or the review panel has put in; but people must know that there is a follow-up program and what their rights are under it.

As well, under this bill there is a fund for people to take action. We do not know how much money will be put into the fund, whether it is only an injunction or whether one can proceed right to the Supreme Court. I can only say that there is a lot more we can do to make people aware and allow people to weigh the consequences of a decision by cabinet, by governments, whether provincial or federal, as to their environment.

In my own province they may not follow it, but at least there is a guideline that people know each step of the way where to go to intervene, as is being done presently for development on Digby Neck.

Mr. Lee Clark (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, in light of the fact that I am sure the hon. member has studied the bill with care, I find it difficult to understand how she could reach the conclusion that this was, in her words, "toothless legislation", particularly in light of the fact that those who are writing on behalf of the Dutch government—and I think that we all understand that the Dutch government has a world-wide reputation for being leaders in the field of environmental protection—wrote a letter of August 3 to Mr. Robinson who is in charge of FEARO. They said in part:

Bill C-78, it is not the most exciting name but the content counts. We, the whole EIA-department, would like to congratulate you and FEARO with this milestone.

They continued: