

Government Orders

What about this legislation? Will it bring about integrated economic environmental decision-making? I do not think so, particularly when looking at the regulatory loopholes.

Let us take a look at some of them because as witnesses told the committee one after the other, Mr. Bruchet from the Canadian Petroleum Association said: "It is not necessarily the legislation but the regulations that have the greatest impact".

There are 15 sets of regulations, like a telephone book, being hidden in the minister's office at this very moment so that members of the House cannot see them when we are voting on the legislation, so the public has never had a chance to see them. I will outline why that is so important.

Bill Andrews from the West Coast Environmental Law Association stated: "The regulations themselves are an important if not the most important part of the bill".

Professor Morse from the Canadian Bar Association stated before committee: "About the importance of reviewing regulations before the passage of the bill is that it is very important. There is just too much scope left for regulations".

Even Ms. Brown from the Federal Environmental Assessment Review Office stated: "The regulations will define a comprehensive study list and the exclusion list".

So any Canadian who naively believes that this legislation when passed would indicate what the comprehensive study hit list would be, what projects for sure would be studied or which ones would be excluded, is dreaming in technicolor.

Let me give some examples. The proof is really in the pudding. This was kindly prepared by Franklin S. Gertler, chairman of the national environmental law section of the Canadian Bar Association.

Let me give some examples of things that will be excluded by regulation. This really tells it all. Airports, major linear developments, highways, transmission lines and pipelines will be exempt. Any new railroad extension of less than 100 kilometres will be exempt. It does not matter where it is in the country, if it is less than 100 kilometres, it will be exempt.

There is no understanding of ecosystems or biophysical reality demonstrated there. That 100 kilometre section of railroad could be in the most sensitive environment in

all of Canada. There is a review for a 500 kilometre one in an area of the country where it does not affect anything, but it is exempted in a highly sensitive area. Railroads would be built 99 kilometres at a time. It is pretty obvious what it is planning.

An exemption for the abandonment of rail lines, the exemption of twin-tracking, the exemption of new nuclear reactors, slow-pokes, anything under 30 thermal megawatts would be exempted. Can you imagine? A nuclear reactor is put in a hospital and it is not necessary to assess the impact of bringing the radiated materials into or out of the hospital. Give me a break.

Mines are exempted, as long as they are less than 10,000 tonnes per day. It does not matter whether they are high arsenic, high acid content, they are exempted. There will be a lot of mines producing 9,999 tonnes a day so that they can be exempted. It does not matter whether it is asbestos or whatever.

On dams, as long as not more than 100 cubic meters per second is being taken, they are exempt.

On a final point, Mr. Speaker, this is an exemption that I know you in particular would be concerned about. That is the exemption to reduce the size of national parks in Canada so long as it is done in increments of less than 10 per cent an environmental assessment is not required.

I look forward to questions, as members can probably tell. I am interested in this topic. There are some serious problems that can only be addressed by a redraft of the bill.

Mr. Len Gustafson (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the hon. critic's remarks especially when he mentioned Rafferty-Alameda dam.

I served the area that has the two projects in it. One of the problems that came up during this project—and there has been a lot said about the Rafferty-Alameda dam in this House—many of the people who pass judgment on the project have never seen the project. They simply pass judgment for political benefit. They knew nothing about it. At times they tried to indicate that the farmers or the people in that area were less environmentally conscious of what was going on. It was just for plain political rhetoric. It had absolutely no benefit to building sound environmental direction that would be sustainable for the future.