

Private Members' Business

about human activity and the environment, Statistics Canada shows that between 1985 and 1991, the net production of coal rose from 60,000 kilotonnes to 71,000 kilotonnes.

Statistics Canada lists in this report environmental considerations relating to coal production, including idle land, land cave-in, surface erosion and inorganic detrital matter.

According to the same report, with respect to carbon dioxide emissions caused by the use of fossil fuel, CO₂ levels have increased from 387 megatonnes in 1982 to 436 megatonnes in 1992. What we are talking about here is a greenhouse gas. Given these figures, I do not know what to think of the advisability of promotion, as the hon. member for Davenport puts it. At any rate, let us see what else the Canadian Environmental Protection Act says.

In Part II, Clause 47 reads: "The Governor in Council may make regulations prescribing, with respect to any fuel or fuel used for any purpose, the concentration or quantity of any element, component or additive that, in the opinion of the Governor in Council, if exceeded, would, on the combustion of the fuel in ordinary circumstances, result in a significant contribution to air pollution".

• (1905)

Under the new gasoline regulations made in March 1991, Environment Canada carried out 1,141 inspections, but conducted only two inquiries and issued five warnings. Considering that, based on Statistics Canada figures, between five and ten tons of oil are spilled every year in oil-producing provinces, one can wonder if this government really has any will to act.

Before putting forth such a motion, we should check whether or not legislation has already been enacted regarding energy efficiency, fossil fuels and nuclear power. As it turns out in this case, several acts already deal with these subjects.

The Oil and Gas Production and Conservation Act, a federal act, the National Energy Board Act, the Environmental Protection Act, the Canadian Petroleum Resources Act and the Oil Substitution and Conservation Act are already in place to control this type of energy.

As I just tried to explain, Canada has extensive legislation dealing with an area that, I may recall, falls under provincial jurisdiction. Consider Hydro-Québec, which for many years has promoted the cause of saving energy, for instance, through its 1-800-ÉNERGIE line, which is more readily available and accessible than proposals coming from the federal government.

Furthermore, as the Minister of the Environment said herself in Bathurst, if reducing gas emissions is a provincial responsi-

bility, then saving energy should also be a provincial matter. In concluding, as the hon. member for Davenport may have noticed, I felt that his motion lacked consistency and tended to ignore the many jurisdictions around us.

[English]

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I cannot support this motion because the framer has used the old debater's trick of setting up a straw man in order to knock it down.

The motion is predicated on the assumption that because there has been a recent warming trend, that we have entered into a period of global climate change. This is alleged to be due to intensification of the greenhouse effect by increased atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide due to combustion of fossil fuels. If that sounds convoluted, I guess it is because it is convoluted.

The framer of the motion, the member for Davenport, has inferred that this hypothesis is universally accepted by climatologists. I would hasten to say this is not true. In fact, I believe that the concept of catastrophic global warming has a lot more popularity in the press than it does in scientific journals. We are now confronted with doomsday scenarios. The hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester repeated a few of them.

It reminds me of a quotation from Goethe who said: "The phrases that men are prone to repeat incessantly end by becoming convictions and ossify the organs of intelligence".

Climatic changes have been observed throughout recorded history and they have been a feature of life on earth for millennia. I am not talking about the gross shifts which resulted from continental drift many millions of years ago. I am referring to changes that have recurred throughout the Pleistocene period.

There have been a series of ice ages and some climatologists suggest that we are still living within a warm cycle of one of them. In any event, it is only a few thousand years ago that this site was overlaid by many hundreds of feet of ice.

On a smaller, more humanly comprehensive time scale there is much evidence of climate change within the last couple of thousand years. For example, I have examined ancient mine workings in the deserts of North Africa and Yemen. These mines date from the very early days of the Islamic period. They come complete with very large piles of slag and piles of water-washed tailings which to me is absolute proof positive that there were, within recorded historical time, large numbers of trees and lots of water available in what is now desert. I am not talking about simple desertification of the sort that we have going on in the Sahel today. I am talking about massive climate change. This has been within the last 1,200 or 1,300 years at most.