

Government Orders

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for the question, although I am not quite sure what he is referring to when it talks about all honesty. I would certainly like to hear a lengthy speech from the member about what he views as ideal or better legislation.

Let me deal with the question that he poses. It is an important one and one that is not dealt with as directly in this legislation as I think it should be.

The provinces and territories do have very clear constitutional jurisdictions. However Canadians, as the member knows as parliamentary secretary, and as public opinion polls have demonstrated extensively over the last half dozen years, are looking increasingly to the federal government and at times look to the federal Crown to use POGG power, peace, order and good government in relation to some major projects, to intervene and to protect the environment on behalf of all Canadians.

What we do know is that there are more than 100 acts that have been passed by this Parliament since 1867 that are clearly in federal jurisdictions. Wherever those federal jurisdictions are, this legislation should be crisply clear and show that there is a federal role in relation to environmental assessment.

Mr. Clark (Brandon—Souris): What about the provincial role?

Mr. Fulton: The provincial role in terms of joint assessments and joint reviews is built within this, but it is not clearly enough delineated. The provinces, as the member knows from the meetings they have had earlier this year, have been attempting to reabsorb many of the environmental jurisdictions entirely unto themselves, other than interjurisdictional, that is, interprovincial or international matters where they think there can be joint review panels, but I think the issue of where there are federal jurisdictions—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions and comments are now terminated.

I would just like to bring to the attention of hon. members we are now operating under the provisions of Standing Order 74. Orders of the Day began at 12.11 p.m. We had 48 minutes of debate and it expired at 12.59 p.m. We are now into 10-minute speeches with no questions or comments. The hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier has the floor for 10 minutes. If he wishes to ask

for more time after he gets near the 10-minute mark, I will be glad to ask the House for unanimous consent.

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I was hoping that the member for Skeena would stop talking at 12.48 p.m. so that I would start my remarks and get my 20 minutes but he did not, so I will take my 10 minutes starting now.

Bill C-78 provides for legislation that could have played a crucial part in the important effort to protect our environment. The principle behind the bill is a good one. It is to make sure that we assess the potential environmental impact of projects in order to reduce or eliminate adverse effects. There are parts of the bill that in our view are commendable including some of the statements in the preamble. Unfortunately, this bill has such serious flaws that those of us on this side of the House cannot help but view it and the effort with great disappointment.

• (1310)

Bill C-78 is supposed to create binding legislation ensuring that proper environmental assessments are conducted for projects within federal jurisdiction. But this bill is so full of holes that there are no guarantees that those projects under federal jurisdiction will undergo such an assessment.

A national coalition of 28 environmental groups virtually condemned the bill earlier this fall after a meeting in Hull, Quebec, saying it needs to be completely rewritten. We agree. According to the *Winnipeg Free Press* on October 2, these groups are critical of the proposed legislation because it gives the federal government total discretion to decide whether an environmental assessment process should be implemented. This is because the bill makes so many allowances for exclusions that it is easy to wonder if any projects will be included in the mandatory lists.

One Manitoba representative at the meeting in Hull on environmental issues, lawyer Brian Pannell, said in the news release issued after that meeting that if Bill C-78 passes in its current form, "Canada will return to the dark ages of environmental law".

Such legislation, returning us to the medieval ages of environmental awareness, is the last thing Canadians want, it is the last thing we need at a time when all around us we see evidence of the damage we have already caused to our environment.