

fully endorse. Those are principles we in the Bloc are prepared to support, because, as I said before, this is very important for the future of our children and grandchildren.

These principles are already being applied in my riding, in Matapédia—Matane, and more specifically in connection with forest management. We did not invent these principles but we support them wholeheartedly. In the last 20 years, we have really invested in our forests, and there are some wonderful things to see and some wonderful things are happening as a result of our efforts.

• (1545)

In my opinion, it is no longer possible to speak about development of natural resources without speaking about sustainable development. The bill before us therefore has the advantage, and we support this, of applying the principle of integrated management and sustainable development to all natural resources.

This being said, I and my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois understand perfectly well that the objective of the present bill is to formalize what is actually taking place.

I hope that our colleagues in the Liberal Party do not expect us to support this bill to establish the Department of Natural Resources. It is a bill to which we have no trouble speaking. Quebecers elected us, a sovereigntist party, to defend the interests of Quebec and, at the same time, to initiate dialogue with the rest of Canada, with a view to laying the groundwork for our eventual sovereignty.

I note, however, that the present Liberal government seems to have absolutely no intention of respecting the jurisdiction of Quebec or even that of the other provinces, although this jurisdiction was conferred under the Constitution that governs us. I would remind the government that natural resources are a provincial responsibility, under the Constitution of 1867, and that this right was reaffirmed by the 1982 Liberal coup.

So much for this government's respect for its partners. By establishing this department, the government repudiates the basic principles which should govern efficient management of this country. It also creates a new bone of contention between the provinces, the territories and itself.

I will never lay enough stress on this issue. I have said it before and I repeat: Natural resources are a provincial area of jurisdiction in which the federal government has no business. We have to defend Quebec's exclusive jurisdiction over natural resources and will always do so.

We, in the Bloc Québécois, would renege on our promises and most of all neglect the mandate our constituents have given us, if we were to keep quiet about the federal government's involvement in an exclusively provincial area of jurisdiction. We

Government Orders

cannot stand idly by in the face of such an attack and a bill which, as it stands now, is an affront to the politicians in Quebec and the other Canadian provinces.

I do not understand how they can boast that they are acting in the best interests of the country, when they do not even abide by their own Constitution. If the government really wanted to respect the terms of the Constitution of Canada, it would abolish the Department of Natural Resources and let the provinces manage this area which comes under their own jurisdiction.

Since the very beginning, every successive Quebec government has defended the provincial areas of jurisdiction defined in the Canadian Constitution, starting with Mr. Lesage, "Masters in our own house", and then Mr. Johnson, "Sovereignty or Independence", but even before their time, Quebec had always requested provincial autonomy.

Even the more federalist of the Quebec premiers have insisted that the Constitution be fully applied, especially in the area of natural resources.

• (1550)

As is, this bill allows the government to enter into agreements with organizations as well as individuals and companies. It allows the government to award contracts in the natural resources and forestry sectors, even to individuals. Yet, the achievement of 1982, the 1982 Constitution Act, defines very clearly the provincial areas of jurisdiction enshrined in section 92(a) concerning the development, conservation and management of forest resources, including laws in relation to the rate of primary production therefrom.

Every successive Quebec government has asked that Quebec jurisdiction over natural resources be respected and now this bill negates these repeated requests.

Just one year ago, a known federalist, Quebec minister Sirros, stated in the National Assembly Quebec's exclusive jurisdiction over the management of natural resources over the Quebec territory. It seems that this government did not pay heed to his call, since we have here an Act to establish the Department of Natural Resources, which, if this bill is passed, will have full jurisdiction in this area.

With this bill, the Canadian government assumes powers and rights that directly infringe upon the exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces in terms of natural resources and this, to us, is unacceptable.

Clause 27.3(1)(c) of Bill C-48 is a very good example. It reads:

(c) may enter into agreements with the government of any province or with any person—

This is where the problem lies:

—for forest protection and management or forest utilization, for the conduct of research related thereto or for forestry publicity or education;