

er a clause, a phrase of this nature in the Constitution, would have the effect of undermining partnerships to achieve sustainable development. That is absurd. I ask whether it would limit the flexibility of legislators. If anything, it would give legislators increased incentives, a goal to move toward because it is in the Constitution. What on earth is the parliamentary secretary trying to get across in rejecting this motion?

It would impede a system or a culture of co-operation and partnership. For heaven's sake, if such a right were in the Constitution, and since members of the business community, the labour community, government, and the political sector are all persons who have the right to a healthy and safe environment, you have here a cohesive, bonding reason for moving in that direction.

It seems to me that the more one thinks about it, this motion would actually help enormously to achieve the major strategic goals that the parliamentary secretary has in mind. I wish the parliamentary secretary had told us why he would not like to have such a proposal in the Constitution from a constitutional point of view. It may be because he has some well-reasoned arguments. To argue that sustainable development is in the proposal of the government for the Constitution is a fine and interesting exercise in public relations, but the way it is phrased in the proposals—and I am referring to *Shaping Canada's Future Together*—one must conclude that it has very little value in enhancing or protecting the environment. This is what the member for The Battlefords—Meadow Lake is trying to get across to us. His motive is to protect the environment.

What can we do and what can we say in this limited time? The notion of entrenching environmental rights probably dates back to discussions in the early seventies at the time of the Stockholm conference, that there are many ways of accomplishing this goal, that it can be done through an environmental bill of rights as many parliamentarians have attempted to do, including the Speaker of this House in the late seventies by way of amending the Constitution, as the member for The Battlefords—Meadow Lake is proposing, by amending the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, if you like, or by rigorous enforcement of good legislation—he did not say, but that is where the parliamentary secretary comes from and I have to agree with that approach definitely—or by the

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integration of the environment into economic decision-making. You could achieve it that way.

There are some who would like to amend section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms so as to make it read, and I quote: "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person, and a healthful environment, and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principle of fundamental justice". This insertion has been recommended by a number of constitutionally interested parties.

One also ought to recognize the work done by the Canadian Environmental Law Association when it appeared before the Ontario committee on the Constitution. They laid out a convincing argument in favour of a constitutional guarantee for a healthful environment as well, and also provided a clear definition of shared responsibilities that both the federal and the provincial governments have in relation to environmental methods. In their presentation they supported the proposal by Professor Gibson to amend the charter by creating a new section 15.1, 15.2 and 15.3, which for the lack of time I will not be able to read into the record.

The government proposals are really not filling the vacuum that exists around us. If you look at them, you find a commitment or a proposal in the preamble to the objective of sustainable development. We dealt with that a few minutes ago, which however is of very little value.

Then there is a proposal for the entrenchment of property rights in the charter, a measure which has been actually rejected by many organizations and individuals because it poses a threat to the environment, for years actually. Then there is a proposal to abandon to the provinces certain administrative legislative responsibilities in wildlife conservation, in transportation of dangerous goods, in soil and water conservation, which are counterproductive one must say.

As to the economic union that is proposed by the government, no mention is made of integrating the environment and the economy as part of their concept.

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One must conclude that the true meaning of sustainable development has not really reached the level of the policy makers in Ottawa.