

Government Orders

The member asks about a national referendum on the environment and he makes reference to the work of the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore. I spoke on that member's private member's bill on referenda. I said that I was not particularly opposed to the idea. My comments that night were to express some caution, that we do not want to use referenda to beat up on anybody, to beat up on Quebec, Don Getty, or our First Nations people. That is not what I would see as the role of a referendum.

I would say this, if my comments are right on the mark about how Canadians feel about the national government needing some direction and support from Canadians about national standards, my sense is that on a referendum question that we would likely get support of most Canadians.

In fact, the comments that the member for Skeena made last night when debating Bill C-13 about some of the positions that members from Quebec were taking, that Quebec will still be there, the fish will swim, the birds will fly and whatever boundaries we talk about or whatever governments and institutions we set up will not mean anything.

If anything, we need to buttress national standards of the federal government. If a referendum somewhere down the road will help achieve that goal, then I do not have a particular personal problem with that.

Let us not just do something for the sake of doing it. We can achieve a lot more through community groups and by having governments that actually do something to protect the environment.

Mr. Alex Kindy (Calgary Northeast): Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment on national referenda as far as water is concerned. As you know, I had two bills, one in this House and one in the previous House on national referenda.

I am a firm believer that we should consult people on major issues. It is essential that people have input. I am in favour of a referendum and I think it would unite the country.

As well, I would like to mention that the PC caucus in 1988 before the election had a water policy and I would like to quote from that water policy. As we know, water is included in the free trade agreement. But what does the water policy say? I quote: "The PC government's new federal water policy specifically prohibits the export

of Canadian water by interbasin transfer—the diversion of lakes or rivers. At the same time the government's conviction that the free trade agreement does not in any way put Canada's water at risk of being traded to the United States is supported by trade and legal experts".

That is what was being said before the 1988 election. The quote continues: "Moreover, the trade legislation has been amended to explicitly rule out any large scale water transfers".

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I have listened with care to what has been going on here with the questions and answers.

I think that the hon. member opposite, with all due respect, is endeavouring to drag in an issue that has absolutely no relevancy to this debate at all. What we are talking about is the Northwest Territories and Yukon Waters Acts amendments. It has nothing to do with this old canard of alleged water exports to the United States, which I thought the hon. member would have abandoned a long time ago and found something new to talk about.

Mr. Mills: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order. I have to take exception to what the member said.

We are talking here about an act respecting water resources in the Northwest Territories. That has everything to do with some of the ideas that have been discussed broadly across North America about water diversions, interbasin transfers.

It is important that we make it crystal clear to Canadians that this bill we are debating will prohibit or prevent any province or any free trade agreement from ever getting involved with something like the Grand Canal.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The time for questions and comments has now expired. I simply would like to add that it is always difficult for the Chair to determine relevance, and I think that in this respect, both sides of the House made their point.

Before resuming debate, since the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands seems to have some reservations about the ruling I gave earlier today that the hon. member for Labrador was the third speaker and was therefore entitled to not more than 20 minutes, I just want to mention one of the sources of which I based my ruling. I am referring to the *Précis of Procedure* of the