

Government Orders

direct political access through cabinet to those decision-making processes.

By giving cabinet decisions exemption from this legislation we see a direct political linkage here that is far from comfortable, the process far too political, far too fraught with error.

The bill leaves important questions unanswered, questions like: which projects are going to be covered? Which will be exempted? What legislation will actually fall under the act? How will Crown corporations be affected? Will foreign aid and development be properly assessed?

These concerns have been left to regulations that are yet to be defined. The regulations themselves, the teeth of the legislation, have been left undefined.

An hon. member: It sounds like a pig in a poke.

Mr. MacWilliam: The federal environment assessment and review office will report to the environment minister under this act. That is direct political control. This agency which is responsible for implementing the legislation should have been left to be independent, answering only to Parliament.

A number of reports including the New Democrats' report on the environment, *Towards a Sustainable Future*, and various environmental groups have called for the creation of an independent environmental auditor to review such government operations independently. This was in the original draft of the bill, but it has been axed. It has been watered down and completely axed in the final version.

It is clear that this legislation has been drastically watered down. It is now, in the government's words, "only an advisory process".

I want to go back a ways and suggest that six provinces have been successful in their appeal to the federal government to cut the guts out of this legislation, legislation that could have had teeth but has been watered down and made essentially useless. The Governments of Nova Scotia, Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario—the previous Government of Ontario—Manitoba and Quebec met sometime ago to mobilize, pressure and develop a strategy to water down the environmental assessment review process.

I want to read into the record a news release of the *Winnipeg Free Press* in May 1990. It states that the western provinces are demanding that Ottawa rewrite its

environmental review guidelines so major projects cannot be halted for court ordered environmental studies. It goes on to say that Premier Gary Filmon said recent Federal Court of Canada rulings have created a nightmare for developers. Well, too bad. If the environmental review process finds that a development goes against the guidelines for sustainable development and goes against common sense in terms of preservation in the environment, too bad for the provinces. We should have that kind of legislation so there is some kind of regulated federal control over the kinds of procedures we have seen in the past and that we continue to see impact upon our environment.

Many projects, as I have mentioned, are now either in the process of being built or considered for construction. They may well escape these environmental review procedures. Let us consider the Rafferty-Alameda—we have talked about that a number of times—and the Oldman River project and the largest megaproject in the history of this continent, the James Bay project. These projects may well not be considered under these legislative guidelines.

In British Columbia—and the members from B.C. have talked on this time and time again—the Alcan Kemano project will divert all of the 12 per cent of the flow of the Nechako River into the Fraser River and divert it into another water course. If that project goes through without an environmental assessment, it will be a disgrace to the environmental integrity of the House.

The diversion of those waters will leave only 12 per cent of the original flow, dropping the level of the Fraser River by over three feet at Hell's Gate in British Columbia. It could have disastrous environmental consequences.

I know my time is limited. I have many other points that I would like to argue, but let me sum up by saying that Bill C-78, the environmental legislation now before the House will not—and I repeat will not—be a step forward but a major step backward. It is a duplicitous piece of legislation that will not do the job and I submit is not intended to do the job which the public believes it should be warranted to do.

Canadians want strong federal legislation and strong measures. They want a government with a commitment to environmental integrity and a commitment to the concept of a sustainable environment. This legislation