

Government Orders

The changes that were made in committee keep this act at the forefront of environmental legislation in the world.

In summary, I hope that hon. members in this House and in the other house will see the benefits of this important piece of legislation and be able to support the passage of Bill C-13, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act.

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Madam Speaker, I just have a short question for my friend. I know that as chair of the committee he has a great body of knowledge in relation to this legislation. I am particularly interested in his views on the regulatory powers because, as he knows, the majority of witnesses who appeared on this legislation were concerned that the sleeping giant of Bill C-13 is really the 15 sets of regulatory powers. I would like to hear from the member whether he thinks it would be appropriate to have a regularly scheduled process or a regularly legislated method by which members could get at these regulations. As he is probably aware, the proposals for exemptions would include major linear development such as highways, transmission lines, pipelines, airports—those are all exempt from comprehensive evaluation—abandonment of rail lines, and twin tracking. There could be an initial environmental evaluation but no comprehensive review.

Now we have the parliamentary secretary trying to cause trouble. I am addressing my questions to the member who just spoke.

New rail lines of less than 100 kilometres in length would be exempt, port facilities, certain kinds of industrial facilities, including the decommissioning of them, nuclear reactors of less than 30 thermal megawatts would be exempt; mines of less than 10,000 tonnes per day, regardless of what they are producing, dams that would restrict at less than 100 cubic metres per second, the modification of national parks as long as the government is not going to take more than 10 per cent out. That would be exempt from any kind of comprehensive review.

I do not want to list too many, but I wonder if the hon. member could comment on whether or not he thinks exempting those classes of projects through regulation is appropriate, and whether or not he believes that there should be an opportunity for regulations to be brought

before Parliament so that they can be properly reviewed if, say, for example 20 members felt that such a requirement was necessary.

Mr. Stevenson: I think the hon. member used the term that these things “would be exempt”. I think possibly he, as usual, could have used the term “could be exempt” because at any time when there is any public concern over any particular project, the Minister of the Environment has the power to call a panel to examine any project that he feels warrants an examination. Certainly if there was any significant public concern about a project, I have no doubt that in the future the minister would take the appropriate action. There are a number of options that the minister has under the current legislation.

In addition, it is quite possible that some of the projects that the member raises could be handled, or would be handled, under class assessments. Further, if there are any escapes, if you will, of things that in the public view possibly should be reviewed, the five-year review process that is part of the act will certainly allow for changes to be made in the not too distant future.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Rocheleau (Hull—Aylmer): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member for Durham whether Quebec's objections were given any consideration. As you know, the Quebec environment minister, Mr. Pierre Paradis, sent a telegram on Monday to his federal counterpart. There have been some major objections from the Quebec government, which incidentally, just passed a resolution to once again inform the federal government that it would not consider talks with 11 and certainly not with 17. The National Assembly's resolution specifies the need for bilateral negotiations, either with the federal government or the provinces.

My question is this: Is this one more attempt to make matters worse and cause a complete breakdown of relations between the Quebec government and the federal government? Is that the ultimate objective?

It was said earlier that several months or perhaps years ago, the leader of the Bloc Québécois, the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean, tabled this bill in the House of Commons. I may add that the bill was modified since that time. Meanwhile, the Meech Lake Accord was shot down.