

Environmental Contaminants Act

Mr. Speaker, after the act has been in effect for one year, it might be well, in the report to be made to the House on the application, to consider whether or not its benefits should not be extended to those institutions.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that the co-operation and mutual aid which hon. members opposite have shown, especially the special welcome given to that measure, surely represent a further step in the development by our government of a stronger national and cultural policy for the benefit of private institutions.

Indeed, I do not have to remind you, Mr. Speaker, that in totalitarian countries where cultural affairs become a service under the exclusive jurisdiction of the government, quite often the cultural activities and the cultural life of those countries have been so much impoverished that their contribution at the international level has significantly been reduced.

In countries of liberal tradition, we have rather realized that the role of government should be to give greater support to private initiative and institutions active in that area.

I believe the cultural policy put forward by the Secretary of State since 1970 tends precisely to encourage and enable private institutions to have as much influence as possible.

The proposed amendment moved was in keeping with this general view. I have no doubt that next year when we shall be in a position to appreciate the results, I shall be able to obtain the support of opposition members for the adoption of the bill by the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Motion (Mr. Faulkner) agreed to.

Mr. Faulkner moved:

That Bill C-33, an Act respecting the export from Canada of cultural property and the import into Canada of cultural property illegally exported from foreign states, as reported (with an amendment) from the Standing Committee on Broadcasting, Film and Assistance to the Arts, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. James Hugh Faulkner (Secretary of State) moved that the bill be read the third time and do pass.

Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed.

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[English]

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTAMINANTS ACT**MEASURES TO PROTECT HUMAN HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT FROM CONTAMINANTS**

The House resumed from Monday, December 16, 1974, consideration of the motion of Mr. Sharp (for the Minister of the Environment) that Bill C-25, to protect human health and the environment, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and

[Mr. Joyal.]

Forestry; and the amendment thereto of Mr. Fairweather (p. 2251).

Mr. Joe Clark (Rocky Mountain): Mr. Speaker, when debate on this bill concluded on December 16, 1974, the hon. member for Fraser Valley West (Mr. Wenman) was in the middle of an eloquent and effective speech. Today he is in British Columbia serving the needs of his constituents and cannot be here to carry on the debate. He looks forward to contributing actively in committee and on third reading, or on second reading if we do not read the bill the second time today.

As I have been fighting that natural environmental contaminant, the flu, for most of this week, my comments will be more moderate than usual.

An hon. Member: Save your voice and make a short speech.

Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain): The minister generously suggests I should conserve my voice and speak briefly. As she and the House should know, I only address myself to urgent and important matters.

We welcome this opportunity to debate the bill once more and hope it will be referred to committee. As spokesmen of my party have said previously, we welcome and approve the aims of the bill, which has become known as the environmental contaminants bill. I certainly agree with the intention of the bill, which is to prevent harmful contamination, and to prevent problems connected with contamination from arising.

Because we are committed to supporting its aims we deeply regret that the bill as drafted will hinder the attainment of its aims in far too many cases. The key to the legislation, as other speakers on my side made clear earlier, is contained in clause 4(1) of the bill, which reads in part:

Where the minister and the Minister of National Health and Welfare have reason to believe that a substance is entering or will enter the environment in a quantity or concentration or under conditions that they have reason to believe constitute or will constitute a significant danger to human health or the environment . . .

In other words, the operation of this legislation is contingent upon the minister or ministers having reason to believe, having reason to be suspicious, that something is happening which should cause them to activate the mechanism provided in this piece of legislation. The bill when enacted is to come into force only on the arousing of a suspicion. Only that will bring its provisions into force. Without that the Department of the Environment and the Department of National Health and Welfare will do nothing. In the absence of suspicion or "reason to believe", their role is to be completely passive.

The question we have the right to ask and which I hope the minister will answer later if she speaks this afternoon or in committee is, how is this suspicion to arise? How can we and the people of Canada be sure that the Minister of the Environment (Mrs. Sauvé) and the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) will have adequate cause to know that a danger is arising which will require the provisions of this legislation to be put into force. Are they to rely on divine inspiration or on some sort of