

Private Members' Business

Establishing this position might involve bureaucrats identifying new and increasingly complex criteria and procedures, which only bureaucrats would be able to understand. We would be on the outside looking in, we who were officially appointed by the people to manage our public affairs which includes a responsibility for the environment where we have a major contribution to make. I do not think we should appoint an auditor now or even in the near future. I think that appointing an auditor general immediately would be putting the cart before the horse. It would be like hiring a truck driver without knowing whether he is supposed to drive a heavy truck or a light truck, whether he will carry bulk or people or whatever. Mr. Speaker, I think it is premature to commit the government to establishing this kind of position right away, because as you know, the environment is a very complex and very broad field. When we consider the scope of the operations the incumbent would have to administer, when we consider the scope of activities under federal jurisdiction, which means the government we represent, it boggles the mind.

I would like to take this opportunity to explain the problems this might create. As you know, the federal government's activities which are very wide ranging and complex employ as many as 585,000 Canadians. This means 30,000 buildings to manage, and these people with the federal government represent a market that is worth \$10 billion in terms of consumer goods and industrial products, divided into over 17,000 categories. This is an enormous area the auditor would have to monitor, and he would not be an elected official. As a public servant, the auditor would not be elected, and he would be asked to manage all that and to set standards and have his own staff. I think it is clear that because of the scope and variety of the activities in question, the government's actions have a considerable impact on the environment. Canadians have every right to expect their government, and only their government, to act responsibly in protecting the environment.

Mr. Speaker, the government is no ordinary business. In fact, that is exactly why the impact of this government's activities on the environment is a factor that is beyond the normal scope of those activities. As a result,

the government must set rules and regulations that control the manner in which a large number of private sector businesses operate. And these rules and regulations which are all contained in the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, determine those conditions. In addition, however, there are other acts, regulations and programs that, although they focus on a wider range of socio-economic objectives, nevertheless support the government's legitimate policies.

Considering the scope and the impact of government activities, what tools do we actually have to protect the environment? Mr. Speaker, I think the answer is quite simple. Protecting the environment must become a priority throughout the government. Through legislation, sustainable development should become the expressed goal of every minister in managing his department. The Minister of the Environment must have the necessary resources to be effective in his role.

You know, it is like safety and security. As long as we felt that safety and security was a matter for the police, there was a lot of insecurity. Today, we realize that ordinary citizens also have to be involved. We all have to participate and share the responsibility.

• (1800)

Mr. Speaker, the question is, how would an auditor, with complex legislation and public servants, be able to monitor Canada's environment and all government operations? I think the answer is pretty obvious.

Like my hon. colleague, Mr. Speaker, I maintain that this government has demonstrated its ability to manage the environment for a number of years, and especially during the past year, with the Green Plan and Bill C-78.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The time for provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired. Pursuant to Standing Order 96(1), the Order is dropped from the *Order Paper*.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to order made on Monday, December 3, 1990, the House will now resume debate on the motion of Mr. Masse for third reading of Bill C-40.