

Government Orders

I have a couple of concerns I want to raise with the member for Cochrane—Superior. The minister in her remarks today said, and I quote: "Economic and environment concerns will continue to be addressed". She also said in the same statement that she will be committed to the market principles. It is my sense that these are contradictory, that you cannot be carrying out on behalf of the people of Canada an economic and environmental study to ensure that these are addressed yet leaving all of the elements of the responsibilities of the minister up to market principles.

I wanted to make the above point and I also have two questions. First, does the member not believe that these are contradictory, that the minister has indicated this previously? Second, has there been any provincial government response other than the members from the Bloc with respect to possible encroachments of provincial responsibilities in the energy sector, the forestry sector or some of the other natural resources sectors with specific reference to the province of Saskatchewan which is a province that I represent in this House?

• (1645)

Mr. Bélair: Mr. Speaker, to address the member's question directly, it is unavoidable today that the environment and the economy be together. We should strive to protect our environment while not being a nuisance to economic growth.

We should strike a balance between the two. We have seen many instances where environmentalists were representing an extreme point of view and industry was representing the other point of view.

I was really surprised and pleased that finally in the hearings of the natural resources committee, there seems to be movement on both sides. Industry has finally said publicly that, yes, there are environmental problems in Canada. The environmentalists are also saying that some progress is being made.

This is the object of the bill. It is the power and the duty of the Minister of Natural Resources to try to conciliate these two extremely important parts of our Canadian way of doing things. She will strive to do so.

The second part of the question concerned provincial jurisdiction. As I said a while ago to my colleague from the Bloc, amalgamating the two existing acts, the Forestry Act and the energy, mines and resources act, is totally in accordance with section 92(b) of the Constitution Act of 1867.

It is almost status quo, although it may not be the right thing to say at this point. Nothing has changed. The federal government still wants to be able to invest in provincial projects. They still want to establish those partnerships with the provinces, industries, recreational clubs, anglers and hunters, everybody as a

matter of fact. It is doing so by financing those projects and is not directly involved in the administration of those projects.

[Translation]

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies): Mr. Speaker, of course I support the proposal of my colleague, the hon. member for Matapédia—Matane, to delete some words from the proposal of the Minister of Natural Resources and to add to Bill C-48 the amendment presented in this House.

I would like to take this opportunity to show this House that the changes that these amendments make to the minister's proposal will simply make her proposal comply with the many requests expressed by all the successive premiers of Quebec for many decades, which this government is again trying to flout.

Indeed, we can go back to Premier Jean Lesage in the early 1960s who said, "Resource development is in provincial jurisdiction. It is among the priority rights and needs of the provinces, who are better able than the federal government to act effectively and in a lasting way in this field". He added: "It must be clearly established as a basic rule of our federal system that Parliament's exceptional powers must remain just that, exceptional, and must not be used to invade fields that are normally in provincial jurisdiction".

Daniel Johnson, Sr., who was also a premier, continued in the same direction as his predecessor and said that exclusive provincial jurisdiction includes "the exploration, conservation and development of resources" in particular.

Continuing with Jean-Jacques Bertrand, another premier, who in the same spirit said that Quebec also had to have jurisdiction over underwater mineral exploration, adding that Quebec could not accept the federal government acting unilaterally to manage provincial waters and control pollution in them, or acting with the provinces on the basis of the national interest, a concept which is very often invoked.

• (1650)

Even former Liberal Premier Robert Bourassa, who was a staunch federalist in Quebec, said that "in the energy sector, neither unilateral action by the federal government, nor uncoordinated measures by provincial governments will enable us to reach the necessary goals. This can only be achieved through concerted action from both levels of government and from all governments".

In its present form, Bill C-48 merely increases the federal government's role in an exclusive provincial jurisdiction.

Former Premier René Lévesque said that the Canadian economy was not an homogeneous thing which could be successfully controlled and regulated with a single policy or program. Provincial governments are in the best position to act, since they know better than anyone their own economic context as well as