

withdrawn from exercising federal power in defence of our environment. I remember that not very long ago at a committee meeting the minister was asked why the federal government did not move in to stop the discharge of raw sewage into the St. Lawrence River, and he said this was a municipal problem and the federal government did not have the power. However, it was pointed out to him that under the Fisheries Act the term "corporation" included a municipal corporation, and his reply was that it would not be political to move in that direction.

This is an illustration of the fact that we must pay attention to the lack of concern by the federal government in respect of the use of its power and authority in defence of our environment. One wonders why the federal government has taken a hands-off approach. This was borne out in replies to questions directed to the Minister of the Environment on April 10 when he appeared before the committee on fisheries and forestry. I quote in part from that exchange. I began by asking:

I take it that what the minister is saying is that there is a certain amount of discussion between departments on these matters and, hopefully, the Department of the Environment somehow finds out about things in time to have some input. But is there any legislation at all that makes it a requirement of another department, working within its own sphere of influence and authority, to have each project approved by Environment before it goes ahead and announces it, and gets it under way?

MR. DAVIS: There is a requirement that projects of any scale, certainly projects that would come to cabinet or to the higher levels of government, be checked out, not only from a financial point of view but from an environmental point of view, but this is not a requirement in law, it is an administrative requirement within the government.

MR. FRASER: In other words, it is a function of government to try to ensure that this happens?

MR. DAVIS: It is administrative and not legal.

MR. FRASER: Has there been any serious consideration by the government to secure this procedure by enacting legislation which would require the Department of the Environment to peruse and approve of any project done by another department from an environmental point of view before it goes ahead?

MR. DAVIS: I do not think legislation along those lines would be considered very rational, at least in a parliamentary type of government.

I suggest we have a government that does not want to use the power it has to discipline its own departments, yet it is prepared by this legislation to abridge and abrogate all environmental law in this country. There is a vast body of law in this country in respect of the environment. It might surprise hon. members to know just how extensive this law is. I have before me a compilation of all the environmental laws and regulations in this country, the index of which shows that in the province of Alberta there are 54 laws and regulations, in British Columbia there are 27, in Manitoba there are 11, in New Brunswick there are 14, in Newfoundland there are 11, in Nova Scotia there are 9, in Ontario there are 36, in Prince Edward Island there are 18, in Quebec there are 30, and in Saskatchewan there are 30. Under the Canadian index there are 55 noted environmental laws and regulations, both provincial and federal.

Through this bill the minister is apparently prepared to propose a measure which overrides all those laws and regulations. In looking over the debates on this matter I noted with interest that hardly anyone has mentioned

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environmental concerns except Conservative speakers. The only reference the Prime Minister made to the environment is to be found at page 8482 of *Hansard* where he said, when talking about the gas pipeline through the Mackenzie Valley:

While this project must, of course, be submitted to the usual regulatory proceedings and cannot go ahead until it has been approved by responsible Canadian authorities, the government believes that it would be in the public interest to facilitate early construction by any means which do not require the lowering of environmental standards or the neglect of Indian rights and interests.

If that is the Prime Minister's view—and I must assume that all hon. members on the government side agree with it—and if he wants to push ahead with the Mackenzie Valley gas pipeline, why is this incredible power included in this bill at the present time? I think it is only fair to point out that no one on the government side so far has given any explanation, or even attempted to give one, as to why this power is needed. No one has tried to come up with any defence in answer to comments by speakers on this side of the House in criticism of this particular aspect. No government member has given us any explanation at all as to why the government is asking for these extraordinary powers.

I would ask, quite seriously, why no government member has even concerned himself with this matter? I know that government members are just as concerned as I am about our environment, but I should think that someone on the government side would have gone to the minister or his colleagues to find out what we are doing and what is the great need for this power to be given to the suggested five-man board.

I suggest to hon. members that they should take a quick look at the volume and extent of our environmental law and ask themselves if what is embodied in this bill is what we should do, and whether it is really necessary. It is all very well to talk about the energy crisis—and we certainly do have a problem, part of which can be associated with transportation. But I would ask the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Macdonald) if he would agree that in spite of the difficulties and problems of our fellow citizens in the eastern provinces, this government does not require the tremendous power asked for in this bill. Surely the government must have some idea of the environmental laws that might be abridged or abrogated momentarily or for a limited period of time in order to carry out the purpose of this bill, allocating resources when undue shortages may occur. No one on the government side has assisted us in any way in this regard.

When we consider this matter of extraordinary powers, government members will have to agree that it is not the function of this House to grant such powers to the government unless it makes out a case. So far as I can see, silence is not a case: in this regard the government has made no case whatsoever for these far reaching powers to abrogate or abridge environmental law in this country.

● (1600)

One might ask what sort of situation the government has in mind. Has the government in mind the air quality standards surrounding some refinery somewhere? If so, surely these places could be isolated and described. Surely