

Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act

Bay, did not meet the minimum standards for adequate environmental review and assessment.

Another quote which has relevance to this point is the following:

It appears that senior officials in Ottawa . . . decided to "avoid any time-consuming and administrative hindrances" in securing the necessary approvals for the proponent (Canmar).

Yet another quotation reads as follows:

Recommendations that were specific and required standards of performance from Canmar or more thorough review which might have caused delays were not implemented or were significantly altered by Ottawa to make them ineffective.

Finally:

The compromise of the environmental review processes has potentially jeopardized not only the environment but the governmental review and decision-making processes as well.

That is very alarming information and those are very alarming findings indeed. The message, clearly, is that the government must be able to manage the total social and physical environment in the Arctic, and it is not doing so in the face of the influx of southern technologies.

The Arctic covers over 40 per cent of the territory of our country. Although vast, it is the most environmentally vulnerable region in all of Canada. Because of the frigid climate and other physical factors, a major oil spill or a well-site blowout—just to cite two examples—would have disastrous consequences for the delicate eco-systems up there and, in particular, for the traditional lifestyle of the native peoples who live in the area. We cannot wait until the damage has been done in the Arctic. The damage may well be irreversible. Environmental screening procedures will have to be tied more closely to the development approval process. I have in mind, especially, the need to streamline the entire process so that, both industry and government can know the rules of the game by which they must operate.

At present there are some 23 pieces of legislation to regulate activities like those of Canmar, to which I have referred. The government needs to examine a process by which a "one-window" approach to legislation and regulation can be achieved. An essential first step in that direction is my own Bill C-207. I urge all hon. members to support it but, more important, I urge not just hon. members but also all other Canadians to consider very seriously the desirability of reconciling the legitimate goal of energy self-sufficiency with environmental goals. I think the two sets of goals—economic goals and energy self-sufficiency on the one hand and environmental concerns on the other—are compatible. They are parallel and can be pursued in tandem.

Bill C-207 is intended to restore the balance between the two sets of goals. We must protect the delicate eco-systems in the Arctic and respect the interests of the native people whom all hon. members keep in mind when they think about environmental matters.

Thank you for your attention, Mr. Speaker, and I urge all hon. members to give every possible favourable consideration to supporting Bill C-207.

Mr. Ian Watson (Châteauguay): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to have this opportunity to comment on Bill C-207 which has been brought before the House by the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. McMillan). As chairman of the House of Commons permanent standing committee on Indian affairs and northern development in the late sixties I, along with Paul St. Pierre, a former member of this House from British Columbia, had a fair amount to do with making sure that our committee brought forward recommendations to the government in the form of a report which I hope at least helped to push the government into action back in 1969 to implement the original bill entitled the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act.

I appreciate too the underlining of the confusion which does tend to exist about who does what with regard to protecting the Arctic from various forms of pollution which may be related to industrial activity, exploration activity, or exploitation activity. One subject which comes to mind right now is the question of liquefied natural gas which is the process of liquefying it in the Arctic Islands and then transporting it through fairly dangerous waters either to the Canadian east coast or to Europe. Some Commons committee should have a look at that question. As chairman of the Standing Committee on National Resources and Public Works, I would like to see our committee have a look at it. However, the problem is which committee of the House has the responsibility for it. Is it the committee on Transport, the committee on National Resources and Public Works, the committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development, or the committee which is responsible for the environment? There are at least four committees which might have a kick at that can, and perhaps it is a matter of who gets there first. In any event, it is a subject matter which I hope one of the committees of the House will consider.

● (1620)

However, I am not convinced, even after listening to the very well developed speech of the hon. member opposite, that what is suggested in his bill would necessarily lead to a more effective use of the manpower available in the various government departments. The question has to be put: is it feasible at this stage to move people out of transport and out of other ministries where they have other roles to a specific and sole role under the proposal of the hon. member for Hillsborough. Having said that, I will make some comments on the bill.

[Translation]

The legislation proposes that the powers and responsibilities now vested in the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Munro), the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Lalonde) and the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) be transferred to the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Roberts). While recognizing the multiple nature of the various functions connected with these collective powers and responsibilities, it is convenient at this point that the matter of powers and responsibilities under the specific provisions of the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act only be covered,