

*Government Orders*

However, clause 21.1 provides for the commissioner to monitor the progress of the various departments, by taking into consideration criteria which clearly come under areas of provincial jurisdiction.

Clause 21.1(a) deals with the integration of the environment and the economy. In fact, this part of the commissioner's mandate can turn into subsidy programs for suppliers or targeted purchase programs. For example, the Department of Public Works and Government Services can set so-called "environmental" standards for some very specific purchase programs.

• (1525)

Let us say that the department wants to buy 10,000 sheets of plywood, but that the award of this contract is subject to some sustainable development standards stipulated in the purchase program. The commissioner comes in, does his job, examines the purchase program and realizes that the program does not meet some objectives, such as maintenance of the resource, the wood fibre used, or that the process used causes too much pollution.

In other words, the environment commissioner assesses the purchase program and concludes that the standards do not promote sustainable development. In his report, he then urges the department to upgrade its criteria.

But, in this case involving the purchase of sheets of plywood, the whole industry comes under provincial jurisdiction, thus under provincial criteria. What will happen if the federal criteria are not compatible with Quebec's criteria? What will industries do in such a mess? Who is better able to impose criteria and standards? The federal minister, under the guidance of the commissioner, or the Quebec minister?

There is no doubt in my mind that the provinces, which already have jurisdiction in this matter, are in a better position to manage their own affairs, that is, in this case, the forest industry and its pollutants.

This situation could occur in each and every department. One can easily imagine the jurisdictional problems that such situations could cause. This kind of back-door underhanded interference is unacceptable. I would like to hope that federalists will be bright enough to understand this situation and recognize that it is quite probable.

Other examples show that the federal government has used its spending power several times to launch programs or projects in areas of provincial jurisdiction. In many cases, after a few months, the federal government withdrew and let the provinces, especially the province of Quebec, foot the bill or assume responsibility for cancellation.

Item (b) is about protecting the health of Canadians. That makes the people on the other side jump and rant on about us, saying that the Bloc is against protecting the health of Canadians and Canadians being in good shape.

What we want is for Quebecers, Ontarians and Albertans to be in good health. Health is a matter of exclusive provincial jurisdiction. It is incumbent upon the provinces to prevent environmental degradation from threatening public health.

How far could the federal government go with this clause? It is a question the Liberals should answer.

Once again, duplication of standards and competition with provincial standards are inefficient and costly, for governments as well as for businesses and individuals. Again, the federal government opens the door to further jurisdictional quarrels.

Considering the crystal clear position of provinces on this issue, it is difficult to understand the attitude of the federal government. This is further proof that the Liberals have completely failed to grasp the repeated requests for change made by Canadians and Quebecers.

Clause 21.1(c) deals with the protection of ecosystems. As owners and managers of the land, the provinces have jurisdiction over the management of ecosystems. For example, to support this role, Quebec has created 17 national parks. It also adopted legislative tools to ensure the protection of biodiversity.

Provinces that have not done this must take action and meet the demands of the international community, which, for example, has criticized, in the OECD report, the environmental performance of Canada in the protection of ecosystems.

Bill C-98, an act respecting the oceans of Canada, is an object of concern for the protection of ecosystems. With this bill, the minister of Fisheries and Oceans, the saviour of our nation and of our turbot, strips the Minister of the Environment of her jurisdiction over this area.

• (1530)

He says that he wants to take full responsibility for the protection of ecosystems. We can well imagine the commissioner asking the minister of Fisheries to impose standards on a municipal waste water treatment plant because it pollutes an ecosystem where specific species of fish live. But municipal waste waters fall under the exclusive jurisdiction of provinces. Is it not a direct interference with provincial jurisdiction?

Paragraph (d) is about meeting Canada's international obligations. The majority of these international commitments were made on behalf of the provinces, which are sometimes the last to be informed of Canadian positions. That goes to show the contempt in which the provinces are held by the federal government.