

Government Orders

importance of these kinds of areas have been dramatically undermined by the approach of this government.

I want to say that the overwhelming desire of Canadians is for a quality piece of environmental assessment legislation. We know the shortcomings of the 1984 cabinet guidelines order, but how can we possibly approve at second reading a piece of legislation that, according to Ray Robinson, the present head of the Federal Environmental Assessment and Review Organization, says that this legislation as it stands does not go as far, is not as wide-reaching as the 1984 cabinet guidelines order?

What kind of a pig in a poke—

An hon. member: It is a step backwards.

Mr. Fulton: It is a step backwards. That is what every major environmental organization in the country has been saying to Parliament. This is a step backwards.

Why would we possibly consider a step backwards when we look at the kinds of issues that need to be assessed? There are existing projects that need to be assessed that are excluded from this.

The mandatory review list is not included. Are nuclear plants going to be included? Are nuclear waste sites going to be included? Are major hydroelectric dams going to be included? We are asked to buy a pig in a poke.

In the post-Meech Lake Canada parliamentarians can no longer go for these smoky backroom decisions. Who is going to make the mandatory list? It has been discussed in departments. Provinces are discussing it. We have a lot of lobbying going on in Ottawa, people who want to be on the exclusion list. I spoke about this before.

Mr. Speaker, can you imagine the back-up of phone calls into that process about who wants to get on to the exclusion list? People from the oil patch, people from the hydro patch, people from the nuclear patch, people from all of these different patches who want to be on the exclusion list?

Legislation of this nature must be very straightforward. The public must know whether it is on the Big Bend or on a major project like K-II, or James Bay, or Rafferty-Alameda or on the Oldman, or brucellosis in the buffalo or issues in Canada's far north or on carbon

dioxide in the atmosphere or on any of these issues. Small though they may seem to be to government, or large though they may be on the global horizon, we have to know how they are triggered.

What happens in the first stage? What are the federal jurisdictions? What is mandatory? What is exempted? Why has the government gone to such great lengths to dig all these gopher holes through the legislation, leaving the discretion entirely to the minister at times or to cabinet at other times? Why was the government not totally forthright and set up an arm's length Canadian environmental assessment and review operation so it would make the decisions?

It would have the legislation. It would decide, and both industry and the public would have an avenue of appeal to the minister so that there was a political opportunity for appeal on a decision to mandatory exclude or mandatory include. What many of these environmental errors are leading to are dangerous situations in communities. I have spoken to my colleagues from the Kootenays on issues like major new pulp mills. Communities are being divided and the process is forcing the division as much as anything else, because people do not know what the rules are. That is the problem with this legislation.

Mr. Lee Clark (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member goes on at considerable length with respect to what he perceives to be the deficiencies in the bill. He talks a lot about the role of the federal government, which of course is something which have been evolving since 1984. I think if he were being honest with the House, he would concede that there are substantial improvements in this bill over what was provided in the 1984 guidelines.

I am interested in an indication from the hon. member on behalf of his party as to the role he perceives for the provinces in the area of environmental protection, understanding of course, as he does, that there is a joint responsibility. I think it would be very helpful if he could explain to provincial jurisdictions wherever they may be, whether it be in Ontario or elsewhere, as to whether or not he perceives that they have a role and he could specify what that role would be.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The hon. member for Skeena has two minutes.