

*Supply*

ask the government and the minister how they can justify paying out money and allowing that project to proceed.

On Friday in the House the minister clearly said that the Alameda dam could not proceed. What he failed to address was the fact that contracts have been called on that dam and the contract for construction of that dam has proceeded. Not only do we have the Rafferty dam part of this project nearing completion without an environmental panel in place and without an assessment having been completed, but now we have the Government of Saskatchewan poised to commence work on the Alameda dam. One can almost hear the pleading in the letter from the panel where it mentions that it at least had hoped that it would be able to do a full environmental assessment of that part of the project before it had started.

Now the delays, the lack of action, as the court says the continual evasion of the government of its responsibilities under environmental assessment legislation and the guideline orders, have put us in a position where we have a second project that is under way. Even the opportunity to assess a part of that project before it starts is now denied to any environmental panel.

What is the minister going to do? He is going to take strong action. Where was he on October 4 when that permit should have been revoked immediately? Where was he on October 11 and 12 when the premier of Saskatchewan was saying he was going ahead with that work? Why do we sit here on October 16 and nothing yet has been done?

Where is he now? What is he going to do? Is he going to set up a new panel? Is he going to do what has been attempted since last April when the panel was set up to so modify the terms of reference of that panel that they are meaningless?

In a letter from FEARO to the panel in the spring, it made clear that the panel did not have the right to consider alternatives. A fundamental of any environmental assessment is that the panel has the right to consider what alternatives there were and whether this is the only means of achieving the government's or the proponent's ends.

The minister referred to tree planting as mitigating measures. It is up to an environmental assessment to determine what mitigating measures are adequate, not

to the proponent to put in place what he considers mitigating measures and then expect the environmental panel to rubber stamp those mitigating measures.

We have two court orders that make it clear what the obligation is of the government. It is clear from the actions of the minister that those obligations have not been met. Tough talk instead of tough action does not delude this House or the public.

The parliamentary secretary talked about Bill C-78. The government, from the beginning of this project in June 1988 to now—well over two years—has avoided actions it could have and should have taken, has attempted in every way possible to ensure that this project continues. This inaction gives no one any confidence that Bill C-78 is going to lead to a process where all projects that proceed in this country are going to do so only with the fullest respect for the environment in a way that does not damage it, and in a way that sets us in a different direction, with the environment as our first consideration when we decide whether and how a project should continue.

Bill C-78 does not at all allay the concerns of the public and the concerns of this opposition that the government is one bit sincere. In fact, it allows for this kind of thing to continue. It allows for the government to compromise at any time it wants on environmental assessment.

We have guideline orders. We have court decisions that give those guideline orders full strength and effect, that give the government not only the right but the obligation to take whatever action it wants to protect the environment. Until we are prepared to move forward from the current situation in legislation, we should not move at all.

Bill C-78 does not move us forward in areas of interprovincial jurisdiction. What we need is a government with the courage and the confidence to say: "We are responsible for the environment in this country, and we are going to deal honestly, fairly but toughly with any problems or any authority that tries to damage that environment."

I just want to wrap up by saying what I said at the beginning. There are some things we do that are temporary in nature, that have a short term and not a terribly serious impact. This is one that does have serious impact.