

*Canadian Environmental Protection Act*

that when Parliament changes one word in some legislation, or a very small clause, further down the road someone can use that small change to make a drastic change in the effect of the legislation.

If this was the only example of that kind of thing, then perhaps we would not be worried about what happens to the regulations concerning the environment after this legislation is passed. However, there are other examples. Bill C-124 has not been passed by this House, but we are told that the industry is waiting for it to be passed so that it can increase the number of dust particles in the air in the coal mines of Cape Breton. The legislation does not indicate that there will be an increase in those particles which create a fire or health hazard, but we know there are people who have been working behind the scenes to make sure that the regulations allow the corporations to do so.

A third example relates to an issue which has been dealt with in Question Period over the last couple of days. The American film industry has said in a circular it sent to its membership that it has the agreement of the Government of Canada to be involved in the setting of regulations after the House finally deals with legislation concerning film distribution. This legislation has not even been debated in the House, yet the lobbyists for the American industry are saying they already have the Government's agreement that they will be in a position to make sure the regulations fit the needs and concerns of the American film industry, not those of the Canadian film industry or Canadian distributors. What does that do to the debate in the House? We will be dealing with legislation which seems to indicate that the Government is to stand firm and ensure that there is a healthy Canadian film industry, but with this statement by the Americans that they have won their battle, the whole process that we go through becomes a joke.

This kind of situation occurs in so many pieces of legislation that the lobbyists know it is not what is in the legislation that counts as long as it is vague enough; it is what is done by the bureaucrats and cabinet officials after the legislation has passed that really matters.

I have seen, as I am sure have others including yourself, situations where companies and individuals dealing with government officials make sure that the regulations concerning the legislation are either very weak, watered down, or are not capable of being enforced properly. That happens on a consistent basis, and every time it does Parliament is the loser. The people are losers as well.

There are groups in this country that have been fighting for a strong Environmental Protection Act. They have talked to Members of the House. They have made their presentations to the committee that studied Bill C-74. They talked with cabinet Ministers. They assume that is the process they should be going through. They assume that when the House passes the various amendments it will produce legislation to protect the environment. What they have never been told about is the

silent lobbying, the quiet voices that are getting to the Ministers behind the scenes. This has become a routine, Mr. Speaker. While those of us in the House and the groups out in society are fighting for the actual wording of legislation, making sure that as many of the i's are dotted and the t's are crossed as possible, quiet conversations are going on, not behind the curtains of Parliament, but in the offices and in the board rooms of the nation. Those are the places where too many decisions are being made.

● (1200)

When I looked at this Environmental Protection Bill I had those same concerns. There are some good ideas in this Bill, ideas that we accept, but we are not sure what will happen when the regulations are passed. This Bill gives the Government scope to identify toxic substances. But, how will that be done? The Bill gives the Government scope to regulate those toxic substances it has identified. Again, how will that take place? The Bill gives the Government the ability to screen new substances before they are used in the environment. Again, there is no indication of what the regulations and the requirements will be. The Bill gives Canadians the right to complain to the Government when substances are not identified or regulated to their satisfaction. But, what happens after those complaints are heard?

Canadians are writing letters and phoning their Members of Parliament and government offices across the country on a daily basis. It is what happens there after that becomes important. Again, this legislation does not give any guarantee that those complaints will be listened to. I could list each and every area where the Bill gives the Government power to act, but it does not say what will happen. That is our concern.

It is a major problem with much legislation passed in this House of Commons. We pass Bills in good faith and assume things will happen. We know though that there have already been some quiet deals made, such as is the case with the film distribution legislation which is yet to be introduced in this House. We know the same thing will happen with the labour legislation. We have had this experience with past legislation affecting health and safety in the workplace. Will the same thing happen with the environment Bill as well? It will be very interesting to see, once this legislation is passed, what the regulations are that result from the Bill and what effect they will have on our nation.

There are many areas not covered by the environmental protection legislation before us. For example, this Bill does not deal with many of the destructive substances in use today. Specifically it excludes substances that are regulated by other Acts of Parliament. Pesticides and motor vehicle emissions are examples.

The federal Government took this same approach with regard to the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System. We passed that legislation approximately a year ago. The Bill stipulated that if hazardous goods were being used in