

Canadian Environmental Protection Act

River an open sewer. Sure, he made headlines, but this Bill is not going to clean up my St. Lawrence River where I used to swim when I was a kid.

Mr. Riis: Can't now.

Mr. Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): I cannot swim in it now and I will not be able to swim in it after this legislation is passed, or even 10 years after this legislation is passed. Why? Because the legislation is an attempt to stop the use of new toxic chemicals. That is a step in the right direction, I agree, but it does not solve the problem of toxic chemicals presently in our rivers and lakes.

Let us not take this Bill as a cure-all, or as the best thing on earth. I am not even sure this will be carried on the new Tory news network. I jokingly call it the TGNN, or Tory Good News Network. I do not think it is good enough to be heralded on that new network.

Another thing this Bill does not do is provide the superfund which both the Minister and environmentalists across the country have been talking about. We know we need a lot of money to deal with buried toxic chemicals leaking into our rivers after rain storms and so on.

● (1230)

We have been saying time and again that in order to improve our environment we do not need the rhetoric on which the Minister has been extremely strong, what we need is money. That is what he has been short of. I do not know how to say it any more clearly. To clean up our environment we need money, whether you call it funds, dollars, greenbacks, mazuma or millions of coins.

The only concrete action which the Government has taken, aside from this Bill, which is a step in the right direction, has been cuts in environmental budgets. What good is it to bring forth legislation to control toxic chemicals if we are not sure that it will be properly enforced? Will there be enough people to police the polluters? This Bill does not say that more people will come on stream to enforce this legislation.

[*Translation*]

This Bill does not provide either a Charter of rights for the Environment. Still, the Minister had referred to that with much enthusiasm.

In the opening lines of the Bill—if we go through the trouble of looking at it—there is a little prose or rhetoric, but that has nothing to do with a Charter of Rights for the Environment, it would not give Canadians clear legal rights to use them against polluters.

I listened a while ago to the spokesman for the NDP who dealt at length with the matter. On this level alone, we can say that the Minister has not delivered all of his program.

[*English*]

There is not much in this Bill which remotely resembles an environmental bill of rights. There is a bit of rhetoric about it, but there are no teeth and there is nothing precise. I realize that I am being negative, but I am here to point out the failings of this Bill. My friend, the Member for York East, and the Parliamentary Secretary, have been very kind with regard to the Bill. They are trying to lead Canadians to believe that this Bill will solve a lot of things. I say that it will not.

For example, this Bill will not regulate some of the toxic chemicals which are closest to people in every day life, because some of these materials are regulated by other legislation. For example, people use herbicides and pesticides every day on their lawns. People eat additives in their food every day. These things are specifically excluded from this piece of legislation.

This Bill does not consolidate many pieces of environmental legislation as we were led to believe it would. If we had not been led to believe that, I would accept the Bill for what it is, but we were told that this would be an Environmental Protection Act. That is a big title, but that is not the fact.

There are about 24 departments of the Government which somehow administer legislation which has an impact on the environment. There are 57 different environmental laws. We thought that if this Bill were to wear the impressive name of Environmental Protection Act it would streamline everything. It does not. It controls new toxic chemicals, which we support, and merges two existing Acts, the Clean Air Act and the Ocean Dumping Act, with the existing Environmental Contaminants Act. This Bill is not even worth being heralded on the Tory "good news network".

[*Translation*]

Another thing that the Bill fails to do, and I was commenting on it in English, is that this is not really a piece of legislation which protects the global environment. Instead, it is a solution to a future use of new chemicals—perhaps we had to start there—to prevent new chemicals from being discharged in the environment. But, for goodness' sake, when are we going to start doing what must be done, and clean what is already within our environment to prevent us from enjoying it and which is a threat to our health?

And this is the reason why we will not delay passage of this Bill. If we were to do that, well, the Government might not bring in another environment bill before the end of its mandate. There remains virtually a year or a year and a half, and without being nasty, Mr. Speaker, anyone reading the polls must conclude that this Government does not have much time left to honour its commitments and clean up the environment. It might be that after the next election Government Members would not be in a position to deliver the rest of their program.

Finally, the legislation does next address the very important issues like acid rain, because toxic chemicals are present in acid rain. But this legislation will have no impact on acid rain.