

● (2120)

[English]

Mr. Jack Pearsall (Coast Chilcotin): Mr. Speaker, as a new member serving on the committee that brought this bill forward, I should like to go on record as paying tribute to members on both sides of the House as they piloted through a somewhat difficult bill. Although it is not satisfactory to all, I feel it is nevertheless a step in the right direction. As a newcomer to committee work, I must say that I found members on both sides of the House most helpful. Some with many years seniority were most helpful on a non-political basis. I should like to express my personal feelings because I have a particular interest in this bill and I hope it will be completed this evening.

I should particularly like to pay tribute to two colleagues on the other side, Mr. Speaker, who were most helpful, the hon. member for Calgary Centre (Mr. Andre) and the hon. member for Okanagan-Kootenay (Mr. Johnston). The hon. member for Prince George-Peace River (Mr. Oberle) also played a prominent part in the proceedings. I just want to put this on record, Mr. Speaker, and say that I very much appreciate the work of everybody concerned with this bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the minister rising on a point of order, or does he wish to speak?

Mr. Sharp: I rise to make some brief comments, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I think I am meeting a difficulty at this time. Third reading of the bill has been moved by the President of Treasury Board (Mr. Chrétien) in the name of the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp). In my interpretation of the rules, this is considered as participating in the debate. I would hope that the House would allow the minister to make his remarks by consent. Is it agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I did not know that my colleague had performed this service for me. I thank the House for giving me leave to make a few comments. I want to deal with the point raised by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). I can reaffirm the undertakings I have made, that we have every intention of delivering to the House, without delay, a bill to increase the membership of the Northwest Territories by one, bringing it to two.

I should also like to thank hon. members who have participated in the debate and worked so actively in the committee. It has been a most useful exercise, and I admit that as a result of comments of hon. members on all sides this is a better bill than it was when I presented it.

Motion agreed to and bill read the third time and passed.

Health and the Environment

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTAMINANTS ACT

MEASURES TO PROTECT HUMAN HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT FROM CONTAMINANTS

The House resumed, from Friday, December 13, consideration of the motion of Mr. Sharp (for the Minister of the Environment) that Bill C-25, to protect human health and the environment from substances that contaminate the environment, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Forestry; and the amendment thereto of Mr. Fairweather (p. 2251).

● (2130)

Mr. G. H. Whittaker (Okanagan Boundary): Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to take part in the debate on this bill to protect human health and the environment from substances that contaminate the environment, and to support the amendment moved by my colleague the hon. member for Fundy-Royal (Mr. Fairweather) that this subject matter be referred to committee for study. This evening a severe storm is raging outside the House. An abundance of pure, white snow is falling. We know from experience that after a couple of days, because of the salt and the sand the municipal authorities will put down, the streets will be dirty and slushy: they will have been contaminated.

I am pleased to participate in this debate because the environment together with concerns regarding the contamination of the environment are uppermost in my mind and in the minds of many of my constituents. Our concern, of course, stems from the problems we are encountering in the Okanagan Valley of British Columbia where pollution is threatening to contaminate our beautiful lakes.

The parliamentary secretary said in his speech on November 19 that in his view it is much better to prevent environmental damage than to go around cleaning it up after it has occurred. I agree with that statement, provided we are doing the proper things to prevent contamination. We must not lose sight of the fact that there is already a great deal of pollution in the world and we must do a great deal of cleaning up. For that reason, the water basin study of the Okanagan Valley, B.C., was commissioned. It was completed about a year ago. The purpose of the study was to determine what pollution had already been caused in the Okanagan and what could be done to prevent more pollution taking place.

One must remember that people create pollution of all sorts. Great concentrations of people in a given area create pollution. Therefore, certain things have to be done if we are to prevent much of this pollution contaminating the environment. The study previously referred to was comprehensive but told us what most people already knew, namely, that an extensive effort must be made in future if we are to keep this beautiful valley from being overpolluted and contaminated by the various elements which cause pollution of the environment.

What bothers me more than anything is that little or nothing has been done in the past year since the water study was finished; that is to say, very little has been done of which people are aware. We have only done what the people have tried to do themselves. The municipalities and cities have been trying to do things for themselves; how-