

*Government Orders*

have you. That is a pretty clear example of its failure on that point.

The second issue that I want to respond to has been brought up in the House in the past week by some of the comments that the hon. member for Skeena made. It has to do, of course, with the decision by the government to exempt the Alcan project in British Columbia from the environmental assessment review process. It is an interesting debate. There is a bit of a paper trail so we can follow the twists and the turns of the government on this issue.

Back on May 30, 1990, at page 12047 of *Hansard*, I asked the Minister of Forestry about the Alcan projects and if the government would follow through on a full review as promised by the now Prime Minister in the 1984 election campaign. I do not know if that is a reflection on this particular minister, but he answered:

Of course there was an environmental assessment carried out at the time that the new arrangement was made.

• (1820 )

We now have a decision made two Fridays ago exempting this project from the Environmental Assessment Review Process. What is it? Was there an assessment done or not? Or, is the government too afraid to proceed further with an environmental assessment because it knows a lot of the information and concerns that are now coming out would be brought to the public, it would be on oath, and it would be an opportunity for all interested parties to review this particular project.

Earlier today, the discussion in the House of Commons of June 27 was mentioned in the question of privilege raised by the member by the Speaker after Question Period today. The Speaker will be reporting back to the House on the member for Skeena's question of privilege. I would suggest a reading of the discussion in *Hansard* at page 13173 about commitments of the government as to whether it would proceed with any terms or changes to the environmental assessment guidelines while Bill C-78 was being discussed.

I know there will be a report back from the Speaker. But if it was not the technical word followed of the agreement made in the House, certainly the spirit of that

agreement was not followed by the government in exempting the Alcan project from the agreement made on June 27 in the House. I expect to hear exactly what that most important ruling may be. In fact, the action taken by the Minister of Fisheries two Fridays ago may be a contempt of Parliament. It may have been a contempt of an agreement made in the House that there would not be any fooling around, if you like, when Bill C-78 was being discussed.

Why is this project so particularly important? It goes back for some time. For those who were not in northern B.C. in the 1984 federal election when this issue was being debated then. I do not recall seeing the provincial Minister of the Environment, who is now criticizing the federal officials on this matter, around the campaign in 1984. At that time, a crucial decision was made. The New Democratic Party was the only party at the time that said it should have a full environmental review and it should provide funding to interveners.

There was the election victory by the Conservatives in 1984, with the blessing then of the Liberal Party which did not support funding to interveners at that time. Its position may have changed, let us hope so. It goes back to the debate about what kind of effect and impact this project is going to have on the Nechako River, flowing into the Fraser River.

I quote from a publication called *British Columbia Report* of June 4, 1990. It is probably not subscribed to by many New Democrats and probably not considered to be a publishing wing of the NDP research group. The title alone suggests the impact: "Alcan's gigantic private fiefdom—They're taking the river from us, bitter north-central residents charge". The article states:

The flow at Prince George will be reduced to 50 per cent of its pre-1950 flow rate.

This is after the settlement agreement that was signed by the government a couple of years ago to the point now where we have a decision to exempt this whole agreement, this massive project from the environmental assessment review guidelines. It is a shocking condemnation of the government's attitude towards this whole project and the people of British Columbia.