

Government Organization Act, 1970

which, in provincial cases, and I am talking now about provincial jurisdiction exclusively, might be desirable. These provincial standards may not be good enough. Nevertheless they would be desirable if we were raising standards in a provincial area of responsibility. Here is another reason for omitting the word "national".

I do not want to leave the impression that I would undermine national standards. We must have national standards. We must administer our national affairs in a national way from coast to coast. There must be no exceptions. On the other hands, I believe the department, when it is set up, should occasionally be able to move into the international arena and promote international standards. I would also think that on occasion we might do some research, and lend some aid and advice to provinces administering standards which are provincial under the law. I also want to be free to support provinces and municipalities which want to set standards higher than national standards.

In short, I am making a plea for full flexibility in the administration of the department while making it abundantly clear that our own legislation pertaining to the national affairs of Canada and to matters within federal jurisdiction should be national in scope. I think the word "national" should appear again and again in specific pieces of legislation but I do not think it should be included in this particular clause defining the whole range of the department's activities, since it would limit those activities exclusively to the pursuit of national objectives and standards.

Mr. Harding: If I might comment for a few moments—

The Chairman: Order. With respect, I suggest the Chair be given an opportunity to recognize hon. members before they begin to speak. The hon. member for Kootenay West.

Mr. Harding: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. May I make a comment on the minister's statement? I am pleased to hear him say once again that he is interested in national standards, but I want to make it clear that the hon. gentleman is just playing with words. Let him read the clause. He is saying, in effect: Let us leave this wide open so that provinces can set standards higher than national standards. I want to tell him that it is being left open in order that the provinces can set standards which are lower than national standards.

Mr. Davis: Not in areas under federal jurisdiction.

Mr. Harding: Let us go back to the clause. It says the intention is to initiate, recommend, undertake and co-ordinate programs of the Government of Canada. We are not talking about the provinces but about the government of Canada. And what type of program? Programs which are designed to promote the establishment or adoption of objectives or standards relating to environmental quality of pollution control. We are talking here about federal government programs, and this is why we urge the minister to take another look at this clause. We want national objectives.

[Mr. Davis.]

The minister also maintained that the wording we suggest restrict his work internationally. Well, let him put in the word "international". That is simple enough. Make it "national or international", I don't care. But I believe he is doing a disservice to the legislation, to the general public and to the intentions of Parliament with regard to this legislation unless he agrees to the addition of the word "national" in that clause. I urge the minister once again to accept the new definition. We want national standards. The minister has told us he wants them, too, and that he intends to work toward them.

● (3:30 p.m.)

All we are requesting the department to do is to put this word in the legislation so we have no more loosely worded clauses that could mean anything. Once more, I urge the minister to read over this part of the bill dealing with federal programs. We must be firm and tough in our determination to tell industries, organizations, governments and individuals in Canada that we are aiming for high national objectives, and that these objectives are stated in the legislation. Without this word, the clause can mean anything, which is exactly what it will mean without it in the years to come.

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Chairman, I have already indicated that I am going to support the amendment, but since the minister is here I should like to ask him one or two questions. I ask them objectively because I realize there are problems the minister has to face. Under our constitution, as it now exists, any federal government would face serious problems in dealing with environmental issues. In this regard, the question is not what should be done. From what I have seen of the minister and from what I have heard him say, I have the feeling he would like to go further than this legislation goes. However, I think he will agree with me that federal jurisdiction is now limited to jurisdiction based on the criminal law. This is the springboard of our jurisdiction, and it does offer only limited opportunities to the federal government.

This morning I was listening to a CBC radio report about some legislation that had just been introduced in the province of Alberta regarding pollution. The legislation provided for regulations to be made. Since the legislation dealt with matters of provincial jurisdiction the legislature was able to provide for regulations rather than simply imposing sanctions. Nevertheless, sanctions are essential. Large corporations and companies, as well as individuals, in Canada must understand that failure to comply with standards of safety in matters dealing with the environment will lead to some form of punishment, such as in the form of a fine. But in addition to this, the right to regulate, which is a very important one, ought to be available and it is very limited at the present time as far as the federal government is concerned. Regulations are only made vis-a-vis the Criminal Code, and it is this which poses great difficulties.

I do not need to elaborate on the importance of this subject. Although I will have a lot to say about other parts of this bill and will raise objection to them, with