

Government Orders

Assessment and Review Process, commonly called EARP.

The environmental assessments are intended to determine whether a project or activity will harm human health, fish, or wildlife, or their habitats, and if so, how these affects can be mitigated. If environmental damage cannot be mitigated, the review should force a halt to the project or activity under review.

What do we have in this particular reform package, Bill C-78? We have a promise that all cabinet decisions will be reviewed for environmental impacts although these reviews do not have to be made public. We have \$100 million per year in additional person-years for the EARPs and we have interveners or participant funding to support public participation in EARPs.

What is wrong with Bill C-78? The bill will be less effective than the present EARP guidelines that we now have in place. It appears that it will undo the process made through court decisions like the Muldoon decision on the Rafferty-Alameda dam.

The measures in this bill are left up to the discretion of the environment minister, making it difficult for the courts to order compliance.

Cabinet decisions and government policy in general will be exempted from the law. Although intervener funding has been promised, as I have said, it is not in the legislation, so could be easily withdrawn. In addition, the level of funding is not yet clear.

Crown corporations, CIDA, and Export Development Corporation are all exempted under this new act. Basic questions, such as which project will be reviewed, which will be exempt, and what rules will apply, are not answered by this bill. This apparently will be in the regulations which, as we all know, can be changed by cabinet.

The process that we have run into here throughout this bill is a process which has introduced this bill, first reading, on June 18, 1990 and it was referred to a special pre-study committee. The pre-study committee unfortunately was disbanded before any work was done and, of course, we have the continuation of the debate now ongoing.

I found the comments and editorial in *The Ottawa Citizen* last June interesting. The headline read: "Envi-

ronmental Review—Trust us, we're Green Tories". Some of the comments within that are fairly relevant when we look at exactly where this bill is going and what is involved. I would like to read a little of this editorial from June 19, 1990, from *The Ottawa Citizen*. It talks about the flaws in the system and the good intentions perhaps of the government but say that it is unconvincing because those assessments will not become public. It then goes on to say:

The first part of Monday's package is even more seriously flawed. The promised legislation is supposed to set up environmental reviews of government-funded projects *before* the bulldozers move in. It would give review panels power to call evidence and question witnesses. It would help finance environmental opponents of projects.

But the core of the new law is hollow. What types of projects must be reviewed? What other federal laws automatically trigger environmental assessment? What projects are exempt? What rules apply to aid projects?

It also talks about the regulations. It states:

Regulations mean flexibility, says the government. Exactly. The public has seen which way the Conservatives flex when environmental protection is at issue. This government hasn't earned that degree of trust.

The trust it speaks of is the trust that Canadians are looking for in governments. They are finished and tired, as we have seen throughout Canada with governments—Liberals and Conservatives—in the past who have given hollow promises and then not followed through with their promises. The promises in this case I think have been promises that we have seen constantly leading up into elections without any substance.

We have a chance for once of keeping some of those promises, the promises that we actually are about our environment, we actually care about what is happening.

The debate a couple of weeks ago on a Private Member's Motion was interesting. The motion of the hon. member for Okanagan—Shuswap refers to funding for various waste management programs and suggests that perhaps the federal government should put its money where its mouth is and assist in some of these areas of funding. A Liberal member got up and talked about municipal infrastructure, totally losing the point of the motion before the House. The point was that our environment is what is important, not the roads, not the sidewalks, but the structure to keep our water and water systems clean and healthy and our air clean.