

*Canadian Environmental Protection Act***BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

DISPOSITION OF PRIVATE MEMBER'S MOTION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Before I recognize the next speaker, may I say that I have received written notice from the Hon. Member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan (Mr. Angus) that he is unable to move his motion during the hour of Private Members' Business on Thursday, May 5, 1988. It has not been possible to arrange an exchange of positions in the order of precedence pursuant to Standing Order 39. Accordingly, I am directing the Table Officers to drop that item of business to the bottom of the order of precedence.

Since notice will be removed, the hour for Private Members' Business will be cancelled, and pursuant to Standing Order 39, the House will continue with the business before it prior to that hour until the ordinary hour of daily adjournment.

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GOVERNMENT ORDERS**CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT**

MEASURE TO ENACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. McMillan, that Bill C-74, an Act respecting protection of the environment and of human life and health, be read the third time and passed, and the motion of Mr. Hawkes.

That this question be now put

Mr. Dan Heap (Spadina): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak on Bill C-74. As has been pointed out, the subject is very important. We have been warned on all sides by national writers, by international critics, by people from many countries and, certainly not least, from people in our own country, that we are in great danger if we do not look after the world we live in. Apart from the damage we may do directly to each other through war or other misbehaviour towards people, there is the damage we do to the earth, the water and the air, without which we do not live. Therefore, the Bill for the protection of the environment is very necessary.

As our country becomes much more industrial, we must take some thought for the protection of the environment, and that will mean spending money. The question of who spends the money is part of the problem. It will cost something to look after the environment. But we certainly know that however much it costs to take care of our environment today, it will be less than what it will cost to clean it up tomorrow. It is for that reason I regret that this Bill is such a weak Bill.

The New Democratic Party will, of course, support the Bill. It is better than nothing. But it could have been a great deal better than it is. Time is running out. If we use only timid methods of correcting our mistreatment of the environment, we may find some day that it is simply too late and the damage is beyond repair.

The main fault in this Bill is that it works basically on the principle of treating each hazardous substance as a sort of court case by itself, in which people who wish to complain against the substance must prove that they personally have been injured physically or financially. They then must show that the injury was caused by that substance. The trouble with that system is that it is too slow. We have heard examples of how long it can take just to test one substance, to write the regulations and put them into effect. We are told that we have at least 60,000 industrial chemicals being put into our environment which have never been tested. We will never catch up with that if we only take them one by one on the basis of complaint, requiring complainants to prove they are injured and the injury was caused by that substance.

It would be far more efficient—not only would it be faster but it would save money—if we used the principle of testing substances before they are released into the environment. Let the producer or the user of the substance do that testing and pay for its cost.

There are some good principles, some good actions in this Bill, and I will mention a few of them. It does give the Government scope to identify toxic substances and to produce a legally effective identification of them. It does give them the ability to screen new substances before they are used in the environment. The trouble is it does not require that. It does give them the ability to ban the export of toxic substances whose use is banned in Canada—that is certainly a good thing to do—or to restrict them if they are restricted in Canada.

● (1650)

Among other things, it protects whistle blowers who find a breach of the environmental regulations and bring it to the attention of the Government. I think that is a very necessary step to take since so many people are subject to intimidation. I am going to come back to that question later, the matter of intimidation.

It also allows the Government to establish boards of review on petition of individuals who are dissatisfied with the regulations. But, as I said, the weakness there is that if it is only a citizen saying: "I think that is harmful", he does not have the right to pursue it in that way until he can prove that he individually or she individually is harmed by that substance. That is far too slow, as I have said.

What the Bill fails to do most notably is to provide standards of environmental quality to say that people shall not be allowed to put certain substances into the air, or put substances in a greater quantity into the air, the water or earth, to set a limit, at least a limit, not a guideline but a limit, a firm limit, and if the person or group is found to violate the limit they are subject to penalty. That is what this law fails to do.

I want to give an example of an extensive experience that I had with the problem of pollution control. As a member of Toronto City Council a few years ago, and Alderman for Ward 6, I was approached by residents of Ward 6 who found