

Government Orders

ing the quality of the water on the Fraser River. It is jeopardizing our valuable fish resource, and there has been no environmental assessment done.

We must recognize that CN is a tool of the government. It is part of the government system. It has ignored the environment. Once it got away with it, now other developers are starting to say: "We want to develop on that marsh. If the government can get away without any environmental assessment, why can't we?"

I would like the member's thoughts as to what changes would be necessary to this bill to ensure that if this legislation was in place, that developments such as this could not take place, and that the minister who would be acting on behalf of the CN in a conflict of interest situation could not intervene and determine when assessment would take place, could not stop an assessment from taking place, could not overrule an assessment.

What changes does he see are necessary to Bill C-78 to bring it into line so that we could go back to a community like mine and say: "We are going to pass an environmental bill in this Parliament that will protect the environment in Surrey, specifically the Big Bend on the Fraser River?"

Mr. Walker: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. I think the hon. member picks out a fatal flaw in the legislation, that is, for some reason Crown corporations such as CN are not necessarily subjected to the same conditions as private corporations. It is something to be negotiated between the corporation and this new agency. It is ironical that in some respects we have more control over our private corporations than a Crown corporation. Perhaps in its oddball way that is why it is trying to privatize things.

The point about changing the legislation is, first, to subject the Crown corporations to the same rules and regulations as the private corporations. There is no reason to make them exempt. They are not special in that sense.

Second, I think that having the minister's discretion at the end of a process—he may consider it being at the end of a rainbow and makes it at the end of the Cabinet. So, Mr. Speaker, you are subject to the political constraints of a government at a particular point in time. What we should be looking for is if for some reason that is

rejected, if that does not end up in Cabinet for debate, for political shenanigans, it ends up somewhere else.

I think that the House of Commons committee should look at that as one of its primary concerns. Where can you take it if there is a disagreement between a minister and an agency? Mr. Speaker, you cannot just take it into Cabinet and let it have that final say. You have to do something more independent.

Third, we are all regional politicians, so this has a little self-interest attached to it. I am wondering what the merits are of automatically assuming this agency should be located in the National Capital Commission area. Mr. Speaker, the closer you are to the environment, the closer you are to dealing with these people's problems and the more you are part of that community, the more you understand their sensitivities.

One of the problems we have had in building up a more sensitive central government is that when we locate things in Ottawa, people lose their sensitivity to the region. So a project like that which is just a little spot on the map, if agencies were located closer to those little spots on the map, those problems would become more alive.

For example, just think if an agency was out in Estevan, how differently the Rafferty-Alameda dam project would have unfolded.

Mr. Dave Worthy (Cariboo—Chilcotin): Mr. Speaker, this is a comment to the previous questioner from Surrey. He was making an interesting point about the Fraser River. I do care a lot for the Fraser River, although I am resident further north on the river than he, but as he explained—and he must be a plumber—everything runs downhill.

Mr. Karpoff: We get a lot of your sewage.

Mr. Worthy: It goes past Surrey and that, of course, creates a real concern for the residents of the lower mainland.

Mr. Karpoff: Baloney. Totally wrong.

Mr. Worthy: His discussion about the habitat on the Fraser has to be corrected. In the lower Fraser area, the Fraser River Estuary Management Program, with which I am sure the hon. member is very familiar, has evaluated all the habitat and industrial lands in the lower