

Government Orders

reaucrats within it. They have not got to the stage where they can deal with a major crisis.

The government should be splitting out major parts of this bill, introducing them to the House as separate bills. It should use some of that wasted tax loophole money to ensure that groups that are hit by this legislation remain viable, independent organizations within the Canadian structure.

Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley): Mr. Speaker, I have two questions for my hon. colleague who made some excellent comments on this particular legislation.

My first question is this. I note in this bill there is reference to intellectual property and I wonder what that has to do with this government.

Second, the member referred to emergency planning. If I am not mistaken, in this bill there is a reference now to the whole procedure of emergency planning coming under the aegis of the Minister of National Defence. If it has not changed in the last while, it is my understanding that there are considerable powers given to ministers of the Crown that are laid out by Order in Council as to what powers they would have in light of an emergency.

In the past, in any case, those powers were very Draconian. No one would deny the need for the government to act in emergencies, but given some of the authority that are given to ministers, would it not be better for that authority to be passed by Parliament as opposed to Order in Council by cabinet.

I would like the member to make some observations about that particular situation and how it may relate to this bill.

Mr. Whittaker: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley. He has obviously studied the area of emergency preparedness fairly carefully, being from British Columbia. He knows the problems, particularly on Vancouver Island and the lower mainland, with regard to earthquakes. This is a bigger problem if we look at things that the Auditor General touched on such as the Bhopal and Chernobyl problems.

These are things that while we are quick to say they happen elsewhere but would never happen here, we have to acknowledge that in fact those are real problems that could occur within our own country.

We have to ask how important is this. I have to agree with the member that the importance of this is so great that it should be brought before Parliament and debated. The power should be here with Parliament as opposed to allowing a minister to delegate the power to one of his chiefs.

I think the thrust has to be that we as parliamentarians have to ensure that Canadians are protected particularly with respect to such things as earthquakes that are always present in the minds of those in the lower mainland on Vancouver Island. As a matter of fact, we had an earthquake within the last year through the Okanagan region. I think we have to be very cognizant of the difficulties involved.

I think now with major chemical plants and the possibility of major problems such as in Bhopal we have to be very aware that throughout the industrial regions we have to have the ability to deal with those particular problems.

With the nuclear plants at Pickering and particularly the province of Ontario and some of the Atlantic provinces, I think there is a real problem. We say that our technology is such that we do not have to worry that much. It is not as much of a problem as it was in Chernobyl. We have to be very much aware after Three Mile Island that this could be a distinct possibility, coupled, for instance, with an earthquake in an area where there is a nuclear disaster. We have to watch that.

Look at what happened in Hanford in Washington state below the British Columbia border. If there is a major event down there are we prepared to deal with that in the provinces of British Columbia and Alberta? I think the answer right now is probably no. Those are the things we have to look at and that we as parliamentarians have to deal with.

I would like to deal now with his first point, that of intellectual property. While it is a complex matter dealing with copyrights and trade mark legislation, I think it is a comment on this government that perhaps it is bankrupt in the area of intellectual abilities as opposed