

*Government Orders*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** Questions and comments are now terminated. On debate, the hon. member for The Battlefords—Meadow Lake.

**Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake):** Mr. Speaker, today we are debating Bill C-78, an act to establish a federal environmental assessment process.

It is with some regret that I have to enter this debate at second reading. I feel the haste with which the government is moving on this bill is a little bit unusual. It really cannot be justified, given the arguments that were presented by the government some time ago.

What is set in place by this legislation must be as tight as it can possibly be. We have to ensure that we have the best possible legislation because what we set in place here with Bill C-78 will likely stand for many, many years to come. And our environment is perhaps the most important area of concern for this government and all future governments.

As a father with two small children who are going to inherit the world that we leave behind, I feel very strongly that the work that we do in the House now to protect our environment is very important for their future.

The environment must be a sincere government priority and that requires action and not just words on behalf of the government. Those actions mean a very strong and sincere piece of legislation which will stand the test of time. It takes time to make the legislation do what we want it to do. It takes time to get good and adequate legislation. Let us take that time. Let us take the time to ensure that we do it right.

I am reminded of something that I was told as a youngster by person I admire very much. That person told me: "If you do not have the time to do something right the first time, when are you going to get the time to do it over again?" In other words, we cannot afford to make mistakes at this juncture.

As I see it, the government is rushing through this legislation in the hope of completing it quickly in order to get on with other business when, in fact, this proposed legislation should receive the most intensive study we give any bill in the House. In environmental matters, Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that we will get the time or the opportunity to do this over again.

• (1620)

The existing process obviously is not working. The existing guidelines that are in place obviously are not working. The dispute over the Rafferty-Alameda project in my own province is just one example. An editorial that appeared in the *Winnipeg Free Press* of October 22, 1990 blames both the federal and the provincial governments for the problems that exist. It blames the legislation and the process that governments are following for the problems. The *Winnipeg Free Press* claims that both the federal and provincial governments are heedless of the environment and the law. I quote:

The sight of bulldozers moving earth near Estevan in complete disregard of federal law is startling. So too are the allegations from a Saskatchewan official that his development agency has every right to move earth because the federal environmental review process is mismanaged and worse than a sham.

That is a quote from the *Winnipeg Free Press* of the day before yesterday.

The allegations that exist there deserve a reply and a public hearing. We have had a review panel in place for eight months on that project. They claim they need more time. I am not in a position to say they need more time, but they are on the spot and they know what they need. The federal government, the federal process, must allow for the proper and adequate environmental protection process to occur.

The *Winnipeg Free Press* editorial concludes:

It may be a long time before the dust settles on the issues at stake in the Rafferty and Alameda development. The dinosaurs have made a good mess of them.

The dinosaurs being the people in charge of the environmental process federally and provincially.

The process is what we are talking about in Bill C-78, and the process is what is crucial to this whole process, this whole project.

The government earlier had set up a pre-study committee on Bill C-78. That pre-study committee was to look at the bill and what was happening within the industry within the country, and to try to make the bill the best that it possibly could be before it came into this House for second reading. Here we are at second reading on the bill and the pre-study committee on Bill C-78 has yet to hear a single witness.