

Government Orders

quitlam, which lies about some 30 kilometres to the east of Vancouver. It is one of the fastest growing suburban areas in Canada. It has a magnificent setting at the mouth of the Fraser River up against the coast mountains. Also the flowers bloom there today as it snows in Ottawa.

The concern for the environment reflected from my riding comes especially from young people who see the environment as a great priority. They are right. There is a commitment by myself, my colleagues and the New Democratic Party. We have taken a collective decision that the environment will be a priority. That is why we have been speaking and offering amendments. I congratulate my colleagues for their work.

This amendment calls for a review of this act so that we can update it, so that we can make sure it is working and so that we can scrutinize it because things change so quickly in the environment. I want to show how these environmental matters work and why we need to review things so quickly.

Let us take the mighty Fraser River and deal with that and the environmental problems. The Fraser was named by David Thompson, the explorer, after the fur trader, Simon Fraser, of the Northwest Company, who was the first European to follow its course to its mouth in 1808.

Aboriginal people had been using the Fraser River to live beside and to fish in since time immemorial. This is one of Canada's great rivers. It is 1,368 kilometres long, rising from your province—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Again, I appreciate what the hon. member is saying. A lot of us appreciate the history lesson we are getting here. I still would like to mention relevancy. I know the hon. member will come back to it. But within the 10 minutes that he has I would appreciate it if he would speak on the motions, please.

Mr. Waddell: Of course, Mr. Speaker is right. I just wanted to show the area of the river. Here are a couple of problems that pertain to this bill and why it needs review.

The first one is that there are industries and projects by the river. For example, in September 22, 1990 our environment critic, the member for Skeena, wrote to the minister about a de-inking plant that started up on the banks of the river. He wanted to know whether there

would be an environmental assessment project of this plant.

In this bill there is some question of the regulations that will be made and will it be necessary to have an environmental assessment for small projects. This is something we are concerned about. It seems from the debate that it will not be necessary. We want to know how it is going to work. If you have a collection of small projects, like a de-inking plant and other plants on the banks of the Fraser, that affects the water quality of the river.

Should there be an environmental assessment under this bill? Probably not. Likely under the bill there would be, but we want to come back to this bill, to revisit the bill, to see whether it is working, to see whether the regulations are too broad, and so on, and whether there has to be more environmental assessment even for a small project.

For example, a small nuclear reactor was talked about by one of my colleagues here. If that goes in at a hospital beside the river, will that be environmentally assessed, or should it be assessed? Well, let us have a look at that and see how the bill is doing.

Another area I want to talk about is as to how it fits in with the other projects. I will give you an example.

I wrote to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans on May 16, 1991 about a debris control board on the river, about a board that got \$180,000 from the federal government and money also from the Association of Forest Industries, a like grant of \$180,000 and another \$180,000 from the provincial government. And what that board did is it cleared up the debris in the lower Fraser River.

Now that is a very important environmental project. And it appears that the federal government is going to drop the funding for this and really open it up which will endanger fishermen, endanger yacht owners and so on, and endanger the port of Vancouver by allowing debris in the lower river.

The problem is that the government cannot on the one hand come to the House and say: "Here is a bill that is really going to tackle the environment," and the next week with a green plan, come and say: "Look, we are going to spend \$10 million on the environment," and forget the kind of small but effective projects like the Fraser River debris trap.