

things, one of our cheapest products, yet it is often neglected.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but his time has expired.

**Mr. Randolph Harding (Kootenay West):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to have an opportunity to speak on Bill C-12, an act to provide for the establishment of an environmental council of Canada. Our party has been calling for such a council for a long time. On two occasions we have moved amendments in the House and in committee calling for such a council. In fact, going through my files I found an amendment of ours dated February 9, 1971, which was directed to Bill C-207 and the substance of it reads:

That the minister of the environment shall create an environmental council of Canada whose task will be to:

- (a) conduct and publish studies and forecasts of environmental problems in Canada
- (b) make analytical reviews of environmental questions which are of public interest
- (c) advise the federal and provincial governments in the area of pollution prevention and clean-up
- (d) advise particular ministries as to the interrelationship between resource development and environmental protection
- (e) advise as to the need for specific environmentally oriented research

That amendment was turned down by the government. I cannot recall much support being forthcoming from some of the members who are suggesting that the bill before us today should be passed. Frankly, I am very much in favour of it.

There is no doubt that Canada is in need of an environmental council. I am not thinking in terms of a council which is attached to a department or to the government. Such a body should be established along the lines of the Economic Council. It should be completely divorced from the political field. It should have power to check carefully into various environmental concerns which face our nation, and it should report regularly. It should have a strong research staff. It should report without fear or favour and recommend what action governments should take to ensure threats to the environment are dealt with.

Very often, members of this House and the general public do not possess the necessary background with which to evaluate the environmental issues which are brought to their attention. A body such as an environmental council could play an important role in such an evaluation. We just do not have the advantage of a non-political source of expertise, though such an organization is urgently required in this day and age. It was with these thoughts in mind that we urged the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Davis) to accept our proposal that an environmental council be set up at the time the re-organization bill was going through the House.

• (1740)

I know that we have a council of some sort attached to the department, but here again it is under the control of the government and will not do the type of research or make the recommendations that one would expect from a completely independent council. For that reason I endorse

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the legislation currently before the House. I might add that there are several sections of the bill that perhaps should be altered. Nevertheless, the idea is good and I am pleased to see the hon. member at least interested enough to bring it before the House for debate.

I understand that two or three other members wish to speak on this very important matter, and though there are other things I should have liked to say, may I in closing reiterate that our group is in favour of the bill. If the bill is not acceptable to the government, the least the government can do is to give serious consideration to setting up an environmental council, if necessary by amending some existing legislation. In any event, let us move toward the establishment in Canada of an environmental council. We need it, and it is one of the best ways to get at the root of some of the major clean-up problems confronting the nation.

**Mr. R. Gordon L. Fairweather (Fundy-Royal):** Mr. Speaker, I too will shorten my speech since others want to speak in support of Bill C-12, to set up an environmental council. By coincidence, only yesterday I received 14 or 16 letters from a grade 5 science class in the village of Hillsborough in the constituency of Fundy-Royal. My hon. friend who proposed the bill anticipated for me very neatly a way in which to illustrate to the House the interest of young Canadians in the subject of pollution.

As is often the case, letters from youngsters are much more direct and succinct than those written by adults. As I say, these letters were written by a grade 5 science class, composed of Linda Smith, Patricia Lockhart, Jeffrey Wilson, Edward Jonah, Jeffrey Irving, Donna Milton, Dale Ryder, Kelvin Rose, Timothy Taylor, Kim Eagles, Sheldon Steeves, Lisa Hopper and Lloyd Branscombe.

**Mr. Corbin:** Great Canadians.

**Mr. Fairweather:** We may laugh at this, but each of these youngsters has an interest in the subject and their views are equal to any others who are taking part in this debate today. I will see whether the House does not agree with me by quoting three of these letters.

**Mr. Deachman:** I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I just want the hon. member to know that members on this side of the House are not laughing at him but are thoroughly enjoying, with him, the pleasure of putting these youngsters' names on the record.

**Mr. Fairweather:** Mr. Speaker, I do not hide the fact that I am putting these children's names on the record. I think children who are interested enough in the procedures of Parliament are entitled to the processes of Parliament. If the hon. member has any doubt about that, let him listen. Linda Smith writes:

Something should be done about the oceans and seas. They are full of pollution. Soon the marine life (animals) will die and we'll be sick. People do what they want because the sea is big and there is room for pollution in it. They are putting sewage, garbage and oil in it. Please do something about this or the same thing will happen to our beaches and lakes.

Very straightforward: no horsing around with that young Canadian. The next letter is from Jeffrey Wilson,