

Government Orders

substantially improve it. Perhaps their amendments will not be ones that I will agree with wholeheartedly, but they are amendments that will take the bill from .0 to at least .5 on a scale of 10 in terms of acceptability to the Canadian environmental community.

• (1740)

The bill as it stands is a big zero and the testimony says: "Throw it out or substantially amend it". The government has indicated a need or desire to amend it, but instead it brings it back and it includes it in this package which, very peculiar as it is, is put in front of us to look at holus-bolus. I do not want government members in the Chamber today who are looking at this list to say: "We have done all this work. How can we afford to lose it? Bring back the bill and start up where you left off".

Where we left off on Bill C-78 was precisely the point which said: "Start over. We have the evidence which shows us how to do that, so start over". The government gave up that chance, gave up that opportunity, and just decided in its lazy fashion to bring it back, introduce a couple of amendments hopefully to appease the members of the environmental community and then get on with business.

In the meantime, we are going to continue to have massive developments in this country go without adequate environmental assessments. We are going to have parts of our environment, sea, land and air, subjected to environmental catastrophes that need not happen if we have the proper and adequate legislation in place to deal with it before the dangerous times occur. That is what Bill C-78 is supposed to do: to get in before something happens, not after.

This government is great at dealing in crisis. It is in crisis constantly but, by golly, we have to do something and this is a legislative opportunity to prevent a crisis from occurring. As far as the environment is concerned, there is nothing more important.

Ms. Mary Clancy (Halifax): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to this motion. I have two major points to make: one general and one specific.

My general point really echoes the arguments of my colleague who spoke earlier today and spoke so eloquently, the member for Kingston and the Islands. He talked about the unprecedented action of this govern-

ment in taking bills that had died on the Order Paper of the last Parliament and ramming them through, doing something which has never been done in this House in its 124-year history and, indeed, for which no precedent can be found in the British House of Commons in its nearly 1,000-year history.

I can only say that the government should hang its head in shame. One wonders today why the government prorogued the House of Commons last time. Why did it prorogue? We heard a Speech from the Throne which did not appear to tell us anything new or different. It did not appear to give us any new blueprint for Canadians. It was remarkably low on specifics about its program. Yet we had the prorogation. One presumes it was because the government wanted to get away from here, take some time, regroup and come back with some fresh ideas.

Instead of fresh ideas, we have today this pernicious—and I underline that word—motion of the House leader ramming through five bills. We are just supposed to pretend that prorogation did not take place. We are just supposed to accept the government's decision that these bills will come to this Parliament in the state in which they were supposed to have died in the last Parliament.

My learned colleague from Kingston and the Islands, although only in this House as I have been for two and a half years, not six, is certainly much more of an expert on procedure than I am.

There is one thing which has taken up, to some degree, our time here in this House recently, time that all of us as members of Parliament on both sides of the House have used in talking to the media. It has been discussed on television and in the newspapers across the country. It is the theory of a less partisan style of politics in the House of Commons.

I believe it was here, in this very House, that Sir Winston Churchill responded to the question of the neck of England being wrung like a chicken by saying: "Some chicken, some neck". If I may paraphrase Mr. Churchill, if I may take the liberty of doing so, may I say to the government members present: "Some form of non-partisanship". If this is the best that can be done, I am afraid that the people of Canada, already disappointed with the direction in which their government is leading them, will only have that disappointment increased to a point of