

It is this kind of political playing around that makes this debate fascinating in a way but also quite depressing. It allows the participation on the part of government members by the parliamentary secretary, the minister, and the member for Rosedale to create the impression that they are the victims of some kind of uncertainty created by guidelines which nevertheless the courts were able to interpret and make mandatory for the present government, so much so that on several occasions three ministers of the Crown chose to ignore them.

I will refer to the classical case last spring when here in the House on several occasions the Minister of Transport refused to take a position for his government on the Oldman River dam in Alberta. He was alleging some reasons of safety there. As well, some reasons of safety have been alleged in the case of the Rafferty-Alameda case. Is that not a strange coincidence?

Is it not a strange coincidence also that we have a Tory government in Ottawa hesitant to take action with regard to a Tory government in Alberta? Is it not a coincidence that you have a Tory government in Ottawa hesitant to take issue on environmental matters with a Tory government in Saskatchewan? Is that not strange? I find it very intriguing, to say the least.

I can only conclude that there was a lack of determination or spineless behaviour on the part of this government when it came to the crunch of these two major issues.

It is also interesting to note that this debate has failed so far to recognize, on the part of the government members when they participated in it, that nothing has been said about the resignation of the panel. This is what has precipitated this issue in the last 10 days and what has also precipitated the excellent motion put forward by the member from Saskatoon that we are debating today. The resignation of the panel is key to this issue at this point. It must be addressed because it reveals a profound sense of dissatisfaction on the part of the panel itself with the mandate that it had been given by the government.

Third, it is quite interesting to note last week that the premier of Saskatchewan was claiming publicly that the Minister of the Environment had given him the green light to proceed, forcing the Minister of the Environ-

ment here in Ottawa to contradict him. "Who is telling the truth" is a very intriguing question I would like to put to you, Mr. Speaker.

Fourth, there is the amazing remark last week by the Minister of the Environment who says all of a sudden, that he would like to leave it to the environmental groups to go through the courts and take the next necessary court action. Hiding behind the skirts of the NGOs, Mr. Speaker, here you have a minister who does not perceive that it would be his role. It is his role, and he leaves it to the NGOs to do it.

Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, other ministers of the Crown doing the same? Imagine, for instance, the minister for native and northern affairs, when something goes profoundly wrong in the mandate under his jurisdiction, saying: "I will not take action. Let the band council of northern British Columbia take the action in court on my behalf." It is pretty unusual to say the least, if not peculiar.

Then, Mr. Speaker, you have the fascinating notion that has emerged in this debate that Bill C-78 is the panacea of all troubles. I ask the parliamentary secretary who is patiently staying with us all day long whether he has read section 6 of the bill.

This bill, as we are gradually discovering in committee this week, is perforated with exceptions and is silent on the regulations. The notion was being created by the Minister of the Environment a couple of hours ago that we should support the speedy process of this bill. How would he dare say that when this bill has been sitting without any action since the latter part of June despite a commitment by the government to get it going throughout the summer, at least with interested parties away from the Hill?

We are behind schedule on this bill because of the inaction on the part of those responsible for it, and for no other reason. It seems as if this is a diverting tactic on the part of the Tories, namely, that what is happening with Rafferty-Alameda is due only to the fact that the guidelines are not clear and that once a bill is in place everything will be all right.

Mr. Speaker, that is a false notion, and I will explain to you why. It is based on the assumption that political will is going to be present once Bill C-78 is in place. The action of the government belies that assumption, and