

considered but the livelihood of future generations of farmers, fishermen, fisherwomen, all the people who live on the land and work in the tourist industry. All kinds of people will be affected by the economy of the future. Therefore, looking after our environment makes very good economic sense. We must put it in the context not only of economic decisions for today but of the long-term ones to which we must attend.

Our earth was created with adequate energy from the sun to make it last for four billion years. Our policies on management of the environment ought to ensure that we can continue to live on the earth as long as we have this major source of energy. I think that our time scale has been altogether too short.

[*Translation*]

Bill C-74 now under consideration is entitled an Act respecting the protection of the environment and of human life and health, but this title is nothing but a false promise. This Bill does not protect the environment, not in a comprehensive sense. Rather, the Bill provides for a reorganization of Government measures and for the enforcement of new measures as regards toxic substances, or rather some toxic substances, as the Bill excludes all nuclear substances and pesticides. Of course, it is a step forward, but this is not the Bill required to protect the environment and human life. This is not the Bill required by environmental groups.

There is no Charter of environmental rights, which the experts and defenders of the environment have been requesting for a long time, especially the volunteer groups. The role projected for citizens and volunteer groups remains very limited in this Bill. There would be no legal recourse in the case of inaction by Government agencies. Human resources, especially the knowledge and good will of citizens involved in the ecological movement, will not be used adequately. Their advice would have been useful in preparing this Bill. Unfortunately, the recommendations of environmental groups were rejected. Only a very few of their proposals for amendments were accepted, and only on minor points.

Bill C-74 represents a very small step forward in protecting our environment. It is nearly incredible, but this Bill does not cover pesticides, insecticides and radioactive substances. A person who has suffered losses or damages or who might suffer such losses or damages because of action prohibited by this Act can obtain a court injunction to prevent this action. However, the new legislation should give all Canadians the right to take legal action when the law is being broken and the environment threatened.

The Bill provides for the evaluation of any new chemical before it is put on the market. In the case of existing chemicals, there will be a possibility of review. A list of priority substances will be established.

These are the most useful practical measures contained in this Bill, and they are not very impressive.

*Canadian Environmental Protection Act*

• (1120)

[*English*]

Let us look for a few minutes at the process of development of Bill C-74. The Minister of the Environment (Mr. McMillan) introduced a draft environmental protection Bill last December, without public consultation before bringing it in. Public consultation had been limited to the very much needed amendments to the 1975 Environmental Contaminants Act, but they were not broadly based consultations. The proposed Bill was circulated without much new material and was largely an amalgamation of previous laws.

When finally a public meeting was held on the subject in Ottawa in March of this year, there was vigorous discussion with a large number of groups from across the country and strong recommendations for amendments were made. Chief among these recommendations for change was an environmental bill of rights. There is no environmental bill of rights in the Bill before us today. Instead, there is a very weak version of that, which is a preamble, some of which I will read:

It is hereby declared that the protection of the environment is essential to the well-being of Canada.

Who would dispute that? It goes on:

Whereas the presence of toxic substances in the environment is a matter of national concern;

Whereas the toxic substances, once introduced into the environment, cannot always be contained within geographic boundaries;—

That makes eminent good sense, of course. It goes on:

Whereas the Government of Canada in demonstrating national leadership should establish national environmental quality objectives, guidelines and codes of practice;

Whereas it is necessary to control the dispersal of nutrients in Canadian waters;

Whereas some of the laws under which federal lands, works and undertakings are administered or regulated do not make provision for environmental protection in respect of federal lands, works and undertakings;

And whereas Canada must be able to fulfil its international obligations in respect of the environment;

Then we go into the Bill itself.

While these are all very laudable objectives and useful as guidelines, they have no force in law. The law still states that one must be able to prove individual damages in order to have a case. We still have a situation where environmental pollution destruction is treated as a matter of interfering with commercial rights. If one is going to lose money as a result of toxic substance pollution one has a case.

In the long term the concerns should involve jobs and the health of future generations. This Bill does not go far enough. It is still based on the old notion that resources are there in order to make money rather than the notion that we must sustain our environment for four billion years, hopefully, but certainly for a longer period of time than what is envisaged here.