

*Government Orders*

is an easy thing to do—led to an escalation of that conflict.

That is what I mean when I speak of the absence in the bill of any kind of a clear outline of a process that has to be followed. It is a recipe for that continuing kind of confrontation and escalation of community conflict. If our purpose, as politicians, is to create conflict rather than to resolve it, then we could not do better than to adopt the very vague recommendations and solutions presented in this bill.

At the beginning of the summer, I put out a “Householder” in my constituency, as we all do. I laid out my own position regarding this particular proposal as it relates to my constituency, and the modernization and expansion of Celgar Pulp very clearly. Frankly, my own judgment is that it is a sound proposal and, in fact, cleans up the environment and I made that clear. But it has been difficult to try to be any kind of a voice of reason and to keep people on the same course, in terms of building long-term, stable communities with some sensible and renewable economic growth and, at the same time, with a greater harmony between ourselves and our environment, when nobody knows what the ground rules are.

I would just like to read from the short statement I made in that “Householder”:

On the home front, while we now have an announced timetable and process for considering Celgar Pulp’s proposal for a new and cleaner Castlegar mill, the question remains: Did it really have to take so long?

Surely it was not too much to ask, as I had done since my first meeting with Celgar officials in Vancouver last January, that federal and provincial ministers and officials get their act together early to launch a joint review mechanism that could deal openly and expeditiously with this long-awaited application.

It was obvious for months that the law and the courts would require a joint or parallel review process—and that delaying its start could only jeopardize the prospects for a development which has been awaited for some 20 years.

There are costs to any development. But in my opinion, the costs of not proceeding with this one are higher, for both the physical and human environment—and with no local benefit—than conditional approval.

Let’s hope, in spite of the dithering and the delay, that we still have a choice to make.

• (1640)

I ask the minister and the government to take a second look at this piece of legislation, and while we still have a chance as a Parliament, to draft legislation which will work, which will lay out a process that can be accepted by industry, by labour, by environmental activist, by all of us who care for sane development, so that we will know what the ground rules are and investment decisions can be made.

Certainly industry is not going to be particularly overjoyed with a new set of rules and regulations, but it is better than not knowing what the rules and regulations are going to be. This will give us all a chance to adopt proposals within our own areas which are sensible, which are sane and that we and our children can live with.

One of the other problems we have is the absence of anything clear on intervenor funding. I would like to read something very brief from a paper that was just circulated to many of the publications in my area. It concerns the current process in and around Castlegar:

The approach of the—hearings causes further frustration. Celgar can trot expert witness after witness before the review panel, all of them paid for with money made from the public forests. Yet the public has not been provided with funds to hire consultants; the only experts testifying for the public will be the few who were willing to come for their expenses and a small fee raised out of the pockets of local residents. Lawyers know very well that an “expert” can usually be found who will corroborate just about any side of an issue, because the facts can always be selectively made to line up with one’s personal outlook and motives. It is only by hearing a large and balanced number of experts serving various sides of the issues that the truly irrefutable facts can be established.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to have full intervenor funding. We have to make decisions and make them expeditiously. It has to be a process that is seen as fair by all if we are to manage conflict rather than to create it.

**Mr. Jack Whittaker (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure today to rise and speak for a brief time on Bill C-78, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act.

I think it might be somewhat helpful at this stage for some who have not been following this to first of all go through a little bit about the environmental assessment process. The process that we are looking at now is to replace the former process called the Environmental