

Government Orders

with seeing under every chair a federal monster, a federal presence which may disrupt the quiet life of the people in her riding?"

I personally feel that the member for Davenport has defined our fears very well. I could not have depicted the federal government as well myself. And if he defines himself in that way, then surely the definition must be an apt one. Thank you, dear colleague, for that revealing definition.

You will understand that following such a definition, we will see the federal monster not under the chair, as you said, but on the chairs in front of us.

I am rather in a jocular mood today. I have to be, otherwise I would probably have to see a psychiatrist as the hon. member for Davenport suggested. As for me, I would never dare to suggest that my colleague from Davenport consult his geriatrician because of his retarded and old-fashioned ideas. I respect him too much to make such a suggestion. Yet, it is obvious that he looks at Bill C-83 with the eye of a federalist while I see it as a sovereignist.

However, the hon. member goes a bit too far when he accuses us of being against the health of Canadians, against the integration of environment and economy, against the protection of ecosystems and against the prevention of pollution. This is getting close to demagoguery and intellectual dishonesty.

The Speaker: Dear colleague, you used the expression "intellectual dishonesty". Perhaps you could consider using words that are more appropriate. I wish you would. I am not asking you to withdraw but simply to reconsider.

Mrs. Guay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Do you wish me to withdraw that part?

The Speaker: No.

Mrs. Guay: Very well. Thank you.

We, sovereignists are as much if not more interested in ecology than most Liberal, Reform and Conservative members, the federalists in this House. To say that we are against the environment, in particular against sustainable development, because we do not support bill C-83 is going a bit far.

We are the ones who initially proposed the creation of a position of environment auditor within the auditor general's office. The minister took up the Bloc's idea and introduced the bill.

Besides, the auditor general, Denis Desautels, said in committee that he was already performing this role and could continue to do so if given more resources.

This seemed to us the best solution, the most efficient, the least expensive and the most logical. But the Liberals went overboard on this. They stuck doggedly to the promise they had made in the red book and suggested the creation of an independent office of the Commissioner of the Environment.

They suggested furthermore renewing the mandate of the auditor general in this area, even giving him additional resources. In other words, the Liberals wanted two independent offices, two auditors to perform the same task. What a fine way to manage. The Liberals wanted to create expensive and inefficient overlaps within the federal machinery itself.

• (1515)

So, if they are advocating creating duplication in their own house, one can certainly understand our reluctance and concern as to the commitment of these same people not to interfere in provincial jurisdiction. One can imagine the chaos and the administrative mess created by two environmental auditors. Such a situation would have been intolerable, and detrimental to the environment itself.

The Minister of the Environment—the best we ever had according to the member for Davenport, who is very humble since he himself has been a Minister of the Environment—was clever enough to follow through. She introduced Bill C-83 at first reading stage on April 25. At that time, we were in favour of the bill.

Later on, in committee, everything changed completely. Eager to lay it on, the Liberals suggested amendments that clearly demonstrated their annoying tendency to think that environmental protection is an exclusive federal role. When these amendments were tabled, for that matter, they were in for a bumpy ride, in fact it almost degenerated into a farce. At first, the Liberals moved amendments and voted on them. Next, relying on a rule rarely invoked, they cancelled these same amendments only to move new ones and take another vote. I want to point out that no amendment moved by the Bloc Quebecois carried.

So, the whole amendment stage was marked by confusion and turmoil. It seemed that the Liberals themselves could not understand each other; they appeared to be torn between public servants and politicians. This resulted in the Liberal amendment that modifies the bill by adding section 21.1, from (a) to (h). This added clause is what had led us to fear increased federal interference in provincial jurisdiction, and this is why we reject this bill. Liberals and Reformers are doing their best to convince us that this is not the case, but we see things differently.

We have been called obsessed, paranoid, we have been told we have a phobia against federalism. Fine. We have every right to feel this way, considering the environmental record of the federal government. We would not want the government to do more when it cannot even reach its own objectives in its own jurisdiction.

There are examples. The issues dealt with by the Liberals in the last two years and more clearly demonstrate that they are far from keeping their red book promises and that the minister, whom the member for Davenport has been praising for the last few days, has failed on all counts. Indeed, criticism levelled by environmentalists at the Minister of the Environment, who is so