

Government Orders

The Department of the Environment, of course, has the crucial first responsibility to give assistance there. Hopefully this intervenor funding will come forward. Also, the Environmental Assessment Review Panel has the right to engage technical expertise to assist those groups in their quest for information so that their input to the community can be reasoned, knowledgeable and effective.

This House, the ministers responsible and, I am certain, the hon. member, would concur that it is absolutely imperative that those intervenor funds be brought forward and provided to those various communities on the northern end of Vancouver Island affected by this project and that the technical expertise through the assessment review panel be provided so that a full, knowledgeable inquiry into this production process can be made and that proper conclusions on a foundation of good solid knowledge can be provided.

Also, there is a great deal of this project that is hidden by the confidential provisions of contracts and covered up by the Privacy Act. We have to have access to the key elements of that, even if they are considered *in camera* and confidentially. They have to be brought out where people with the proper expertise can evaluate them and assess the impact to the community.

This is absolutely critical. Citizens can no longer be hoodwinked and kept in blind ignorance about projects that are going into their area. It is absolutely imperative that the committee engage a full range of technical expertise to help the community provide information and that intervenor funding is provided. I am absolutely certain that the government would want that to happen as well as the previous member.

Mr. Skelly (Comox—Alberni): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the previous speaker for his intervention.

This is a problem that we face with the size of corporations that are doing business in Canada today. If a corporation decides to set up a new operation it has huge resources at its fingertips, resources that essentially have been financed by the Government of Canada through the various tax concessions I was talking about. They can mobilize a series of biologists, engineers, and other people with expertise to inform citizens that the

project they have in mind is not going to cause environmental or social impacts that are damaging to the community.

Unfortunately, they can also retain information and hold information in confidence. If we are to have a competent environmental and social impact assessment process, we need the resources and the ability, through the rule of law, to demand that information and also to call to account those corporate employees who are employed on environmental impact statements. Because we do not have intervenor funding from the federal government, those corporations are, unfortunately, allowed to wield a greater amount of power over the environment than they otherwise would be allowed.

Mr. Skelly (North Island—Powell River): Mr. Speaker, the P.J. Wooding Ferro chromium project on the northern end of Vancouver Island is heavily subsidized by the federal government. One of the things that is seriously questioned is the attitude of that company toward organized labour. There is a great deal of concern in the community that the federal government could provide a grant to a company which is prepared to prohibit its workers to organize, to prohibit its employees the right to have a contract with their employer and bargain collectively for their wages and working conditions.

It is important when the government is giving grants, especially to an outfit like the P.J. Wooding Ferro chromium project, that there be an opportunity for organized labour to go in and organize that workforce, to permit them their rights under the law and to bargain collectively for their wages and working conditions.

This absolutely assures that the money from that project, the return on taxpayers' dollars and the return on the resources, accrues to the community of Port Hardy and is not carried away to some other jurisdiction as so often happens with foreign ownership and ownership from out of the region. If they permit organized labour into that operation a better share accrues to the community. Grants from this government should not be permitted to any corporation which attempts to exclude organized labour from that project. This is absolutely critical. It would be my hope that the government would make a statement on that today.