

*Government Orders*

also the product of a likely internal struggle within government between advocates for a more effective environmental assessment, and opponents who feared their interests and discretionary authority would be reduced.

So we have the classic struggle between those people who want the legislation strengthened and those proponents of projects who are saying now: "Listen, you are going to hurt us economically if you make it tough for us to proceed". This is what we are doing here. This is why we are debating this, rather than talking about a prestudy with all of the resources of government behind that prestudy.

This is why the government is now trying to push this through, because it has opted for the proponents. It has opted to see that the economy is going to proceed. It is still of the mindset that the economy and the environment are at two polar ends. It does not yet see that in order for us to advance economically and environmentally, those terms, environment and economy, must be integrated. Bill C-78 is shot full of holes. The government wants to push it through in the wrong-headed approach of advancing the economy.

As my colleague for The Battlefords—Meadow Lake pointed out, we have to stop thinking in the short term environmentally. We have to stop thinking in the short term economically. We have to think long term. It is not just this generation. It is not just these projects that have been in the news these past few weeks. It is the economy and the future of our world. As a mother of teenage children, I hope to be able to make this country and this world a better place environmentally for my children. That is one of the motivations that brought me to Parliament. I felt that I could make an impact. In opposing this legislation, I am already doing that.

• (1740)

We in the New Democratic Party have been strongly critical of Bill C-78. That is one of our jobs as an opposition party, to oppose what we see as flawed legislation. It is also one of our responsibilities to give alternatives. That is too often under-reported in the media because we, too, have ideas. In today's Gallup poll, it mentioned that if an election were called today perhaps the NDP would have the responsibility of being

the government. We are prepared for it. We have the ideas, we have the commitment. All we need now is the support of Canadians in order to implement those ideas.

I want to turn the focus away not just from criticizing Bill C-78, because there is a lot to criticize, but I want to put forward some principles for alternatives. This is the positive approach of being an opposition party. We have the ideas.

I will read from a paper by Robert B. Gibson, head of the Department of Environment and Resource Studies at the University of Waterloo. He challenges us as legislators to look at environmental assessment in an entirely new way. I want to read some of this into the record because these ideas are worthy of our intention. In his opening paragraph, he states:

A curse of sorts must hang over environmental legislators. —the legislators now face a world—

We have tried it. We have tried the regulatory approach and other approaches.

—in which environmental worries are deeper and more extensive than they were two decades ago, where public mistrust is greater and critics more convinced than ever that fundamental changes are needed in the way we treat the environment.

What we have to do is change our mindset. We have to stop looking at the environment as being isolated from the economy. There too the environment and the economy are linked. If we degrade the environment, we degrade our economy. That is why this legislation is so flawed. There are all sorts of inadequacies that legislators and critics of legislation have pointed out over the years. Some of them have been cited here in the House of Commons.

There is a history involved in environmental legislation. There is the regulatory approach which I cited earlier. We found that the regulatory approach is far too narrow. We are talking about the approach where the individual pollutants and polluting activities were addressed in the regulations. But it was not enough.

Environmental legislation came out of the response to the inadequacies of the regulatory approach. Early environmental assessment requirements usually went a little further by demanding somewhat more comprehensive efforts to identify and evaluate the potential environmental effects and proposed undertakings. That was not enough either. Environmental considerations remain peripheral in public and private sector deliberations.