

Dumping at Sea

Mr. Marchand (Kamloops-Cariboo): How about the amendment that was rejected by your own party?

Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain): The parliamentary secretary is trying to explain the inexplicable in trying to defend his actions. He knows that the record shows that his references were specifically to the proposal to involve the public in these decisions. He called the rights of the public small, picayune points, and that is what we reject. Unfortunately, there has been an almost contemptuous attitude toward the rights of the public regarding environmental matters, not simply in this bill but in others.

Let me review the evidence of that contempt in this bill. First of all, there is a double standard regarding appeals. The big guy is given the statutory right to appeal, but the same right is denied to the public. This is a law that is clearly biased in favour of the big guys, of the polluters, and against the rights of the individual citizens and concerned groups. Second, there is an excessively wide ministerial discretion, a discretion that has been slightly limited, but only slightly so, in the amendments that we were able to bring through in committee.

Third, there is an incomprehensible satisfaction with the *Canada Gazette* as a medium of mass communication and the refusal to publish important public matters in publications which the public reads. Finally, there is the failure to introduce broader provisions regarding advertising or to create the registry which we proposed and which the minister could have introduced at this stage, at no cost and with no opposition, but which she chose not to do.

Unfortunately, this contemptuous attitude toward parliament and the public goes beyond this bill. For example, in the environmental impact assessment procedure there is a fundamental and excessive ministerial discretion which stands in dramatic contrast to the statutory rights of the public which exist, for example, in the United States. In the procedure there is virtually no right to public participation unless the minister chooses to let the public in. That is clearly an antiquated and unsatisfactory situation.

Again, in the Berger inquiry the Minister of the Environment has refused to intervene. She has given a right, which I must say appears to be a very limited right, to her officials to participate. It is unclear at this moment whether she will give those officials time off to participate. She nods that she will. It is also unclear whether she will pay their travel expenses and make funds available to them to go there. She nods that she will, and I am delighted to know that. It is also unclear whether they will go there not simply as witnesses but as resource people subject to questioning by other officials. She says they does. Excuse me for my lapse into incomprehensible grammar, but I am so overwhelmed—

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): *Hansard* will straighten it out.

Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain): I am so overwhelmed—

Mrs. Sauvé: By the generosity of the minister.

Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain): —by the generosity of the minister. It is significant that she regards it as generosity rather than as her duty to make her officials

available for public scrutiny. Because I was overwhelmed I lost track of my syntax.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Don't suggest a "sin tax." The Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) might put it in his forthcoming budget.

Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain): While I might have expected opposition to a "sin tax" from other members of the House, having it come from the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) is almost overwhelming. Bill C-37, which has been substantially improved in committee, is highly important for international law and for the development of better protection of our coast lines from pollution. It could also have been important as a sign that the Department of the Environment has changed its attitude and wants the public to be actively involved in issues concerning the environment which are, I submit, the most public of all issues because in the final analysis the fate of our environment affects each one of us more than any other matter which comes regularly before the House of Commons.

I had hoped that the bill would be used as a demonstration that the minister was prepared to encourage the public to participate in environmental questions. Instead, it has been used to demonstrate the opposite. We have a double standard regarding appeals. We have no willingness to advertise in publications generally read by the public, and no statutory right to review decisions. The bill is highly important for purposes of international law. It will allow the government to take place in the elaboration of the terms of administration in the details of the international convention, and that we applaud.

We think it is a very important bill for purposes of international law. We have done what we can to make it a better bill. If it were simply a domestic matter, we would have debated it at much greater length and introduced many more amendments. But it is a bill which we are very pleased to support as an improved bill on third reading.

Mrs. Sauvé: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I do not want to prolong the debate, but let me just say that I am very happy the hon. member for Rocky Mountain (Mr. Clark) claims paternity to all these amendments. As he knows, in matters of parenthood it is only the identity of the mother that is beyond doubt.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1250)

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker—

An hon. Member: How are you going to follow that one, Stanley? What do you do for an encore?

An hon. Member: You have a tough act to follow.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I am glad that one does not have to explain remarks made just prior to getting to one's feet. In spite of its shortcomings, we welcome Bill C-37, to be known as the Ocean Dumping Control Act. We are pleased that it will soon be on the statute books. I realize that when I say "soon", I am