

Following a question period, may I remind you that our next witness will be the Minister of the Environment, the Honorable Lucien Bouchard.

Mr. Runnalls.

Mr. David Runnalls (Associate Director, Environment and Sustainable Development Program, Institute for Research on Public Policy): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I feel very privileged to be here. I was asked, as some of you know, by the chairman of the environment committee to sum up this meeting and to offer some of my own observations. As a result, I have been present I think throughout all of your deliberations, one of the few who have, and I have found it an extraordinarily rich experience. I do not think any other legislature in the world has delved into these issues in as much detail as you have in the last couple of days.

I would like to begin my presentation by congratulating the organizers for bringing this sort of event together.

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I was personally very intrigued by two remarks made by Doug Miller in the course of a fascinating presentation on public attitudes and public opinion. First, he said the environment was the rallying point for the formation of a new social conscience in this country, and it is therefore not just another run-of-the mill political issue.

Second, he demonstrated that although Canadians are very concerned about atmospheric issues as a whole, few understand global warming and its causes. In fact, many Canadians seem to believe ozone depletion and global warming are roughly the same thing. This is worrisome but understandable, for as we heard from Dr. Schneider, climate change is an enormously complex and difficult problem.

It rather reminds me of a wonderful remark once made by Britain's greatest Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin. Bevin, although much brighter, had the same sort of difficulties with the English language as Dwight Eisenhower. Once, when faced with an intractable foreign policy question in the House, he described it as "a Pandora's box full of Trojan horses". I think that is rather like climate change. This forum, and others like it, are therefore rather critical to forming a much clearer public impression of the issue.

Mr. Chairman, when taking on this assignment I was asked by your colleague David MacDonald to do three things. One was to provide a kind of summary of what I felt to be the most important points made in the previous sessions, an extraordinarily difficult job for sessions as rich as these. Second was to comment on what I felt was missing from the proceedings. Third was to add my own views to those of the others. What follows therefore will be a combination of plagiarism, sour grapes, and my own pig-headedness.

The first issue, on what, or in some cases who, was missing, I should begin by saying it really is impossible to cover all the relevant issues in such a short time. Perhaps one or two