

Canadian Environmental Protection Act

therefore is excluded from Canada, that Canada may find itself under pressure to reduce our environmental or health standards so as to allow that pesticide service in the United States to compete on equal terms with Canadian services which have been meeting the higher standard?

Ms. Dewar: Mr. Speaker, I think it is part of our concern. If we have established a higher standard and do not have the legislative ability to implement it in this Environmental Protection Act, and because there is absolutely no negotiations about the environment in the trade agreement, we will have to treat the national standard as the national standard in the United States. What I said earlier is that we will find ourselves lobbying particular state legislatures and Congress to protect our environment here in Canada. To me that does not make any sense.

• (1250)

Many people have said that people are attempting to define what our sovereignty is all about. What we are finding is that we are being accused of wrapping ourselves in the flag. One does not wrap oneself in one's flag when the Parliament of Canada is elected to put in place laws that protect our environment. Instead, what is happening is that it is refusing to put a law through that has the type of clout to it that would give us that type of protection. Therefore the trade agreement could be annulled if we had the protection in the legislation. However, the trade negotiation did not once involve any of the environmental Ministers, either at the federal level or at the provincial level.

What we do know is that at the federal level, both in Canada and in the United States, current administrations have downgraded environmental protection. This Government has cut funding to Environment Canada. We know that American environmental protection assessment has also experienced great funding cuts. The administration is downgrading both its standards and enforcement in the United States.

When we have to be treated on national standards we will find that we will be downgrading our own. This is a very serious concern with what is happening, both in the trade agreement and in the environment. I wish government Members would look seriously at not isolating one law from another. Unless they are looked at in an holistic way, what we will find is that we are in an irreversible position down the road and hanging our heads in shame with the legacy of the environment that we will leave to our children and our grandchildren. That is a very serious implication. It becomes much greater than just partisan legislation.

What it concerns is the ability to comprehend that delicate balance in our society that protects our environment. We must recognize that every economic development agreement we make and every undertaking we make in economic development must be included in terms of what are the environmental implications. To say that that is nonsense is irresponsible.

Until we get to the point that that becomes conclusive, we are going forward in mass destruction.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The time allotted for questions and comments has now terminated. The Chair recognizes the Hon. Member for New Westminster—Coquitlam (Ms. Jewett) on debate.

Ms. Pauline Jewett (New Westminster—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to the debate on this very important Bill with great interest. I feel that my colleagues in the New Democratic Party have raised a number of very important points, some of which have been accepted by the Government but many of which have not been. I suppose at this stage that it is unlikely that the Government will take anything further that we say very seriously, which is a pity because in my view at any rate many of our suggestions have been worth while.

Indeed, many of the suggestions made to the legislative committee which have not been adopted by the Government were also very worth while. I am thinking at the moment of the brief from the Environmental Law Centre in your own community, Mr. Speaker, Edmonton, and the subsequent letter written by the Environmental Law Centre to the chairperson of the legislative committee on Bill C-74, regarding in particular the legal entrenching of federal-provincial co-operation and equivalency agreements.

The Environmental Law Centre's letter points out that the centre has no particular objection, nor should it, to a policy of federal-provincial co-operation in environmental protection. However, the centre is concerned with the implications of imposing statutory requirements in federal laws which will have the effect of fettering federal powers to legislate in areas of their own competency. Therefore, while having in the Bill a mandatory requirement on the Minister of the Environment (Mr. McMillan) to establish a federal-provincial advisory committee for the purpose of review of proposed regulations sounds like a good thing, because we all approve of federal-provincial co-operation it would in fact impose a legal requirement of consultation, rather than simply a provision to require consultation that would say that one has to do this legally.

The centre points out that the issue of required consultation on regulation-making is quite separate from the issue of providing for agreements that specific regulations already in effect will not apply in certain provinces or territories.

By way of example, the federal Government may wish to make regulations for proper handling and storage of hazardous wastes generated on federal lands such as national parks, Indian lands, or the Northwest Territories. The centre goes on to state that while it may make practical sense to consult with those provincial authorities with legislative experience in this area, it is totally inappropriate to presume that provincial Governments should exert any jurisdiction in this area. These are areas of federal jurisdiction such as parks, Indian lands, the Northwest Territories, and so on. It seems to me very