

Canadian Environmental Protection Act

● (1730)

Mr. Grisé: Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Hon. Member for Yorkton—Melville (Mr. Nystrom) has not been in Quebec for some time, and if he did so, he probably went straight to the office of the UPA, because if you talk to the people in Quebec ridings, especially in the riding of Chambly, they will tell you they are very much in favour of the free trade agreement with the United States.

As far as environmental policies are concerned, this is the first Government in ten years to introduce a sound piece of legislation on the environment, and not just in Quebec but in Canada. This legislation will benefit the entire population of Quebec which is very concerned about the environment, one example being the damage to our maple stands and the impact on maple products in the Bois-Francs and Beauce regions. This is very important. We also have our waterways. Mr. Speaker, you know how important these waterways are to Quebec. This Government was the first Government to invest \$37 million to help clean up our waterways, to protect the environment and prosecute those who pollute the environment in this country.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The time for questions and comments has now expired. Resuming debate. The Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin).

[English]

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West): Thank you, Sir. *Dai brozja, tovarich*. I want—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): That translates into “good luck to you, Mr. Speaker”, just in case *Hansard* did not receive the Hon. Member’s words.

Mr. Benjamin: I said that because I noted that you were nominated the other day and I wish you good luck in “Redmonton”.

I want to begin by reminding my hon. friends on all sides of the House that every time we deal with the matter of our environment we forget that neither we in this House nor any other Canadian has any right to continue to pollute our air, our water, our land, degrade our forests, our wildlife or our fishery. I pose the question: Who the heck do we think we are that we can leave for our children and grandchildren the mess that we have left? The longer we leave it, the more it costs to clean up.

I look upon this Bill as a half measure, half-baked, and I know I have to watch my language so I will have to say, half rear ended. The Government should be laying down a national standard which every province, every municipality, indeed every citizen would have to abide by. Since we have no right to leave that mess for succeeding generations, and because we are all going to have to share in the cost of cleaning it up, it will

mean higher taxes for individual citizens, it will mean lower profits for corporations, and it will mean a smaller dividend for shareholders. However, we all must share in the cost because we have no other choice.

That means, Sir, that leadership must come from our national Government and Parliament. If some province or other wants to do less than that, that is too bad. The province that does not want to measure up with the rest of Canada should meet national standards, and I profoundly believe that the overwhelming majority of Canadians would agree with that, no matter what political Party is in power in Ottawa. This concerns the welfare of our country. It is in the national interest, it is for the public good and, most important, it is in the interest of succeeding generations.

I could go through a list of half a dozen things in this Bill which I think are very good. However, when it comes to the crunch, the federal Government is abdicating its responsibility and the responsibility of Parliament. It will leave it up to more studies. It will leave it up to the provinces and consultation. As I said in a question to my colleague from Spadina, the provinces cannot even agree on what time of day it should be. Anyone who thinks they are going to get unanimity on national environmental standards among 10 provinces and two territories is dreaming in technicolour. No matter the political stripes of those respective Governments, you are not going to get it. We need a national Government with the political courage to set down national standards, and anything that moves across a provincial border has to be covered. I do not see how it can be any other way if we are to have any kind of success over the next 15 or 20 years in cleaning up our air and water.

My colleague from Kamloops—Shuswap raised with the Hon. Member on the government side the matter of the use of low sulphur coal. After all the noise we heard from the previous Government and the present Government, the lovey-dovey love-in between our Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and the President of the United States on acid rain, for the fourth time, Canada has increased its own tonnage of acid rain fall-out over the last 20 years. Until 1960, Canada had a far smaller tonnage of acid rain, in fact it had the lowest fall-out. That is because from your province, Mr. Speaker, from mine, and from eastern British Columbia we moved anywhere from five to 20 trainloads of low sulphur western coal a day to Manitoba Hydro, Ontario Hydro, and even some to Quebec Hydro. I do not think there is one coal mine left open in the entire Drumheller Valley where there is a 200 or 300-year supply of low sulphur coal. There may be a very small amount moving out of the Crowsnest Pass coal mines but most of Blairmore, Coleman, and Crowsnest are shut down.