

Supply

being more properly defined and determined. I would hope, if the debate is continued tomorrow and members have concerns about certain inadequacies or improvements that should take place in that legislation, they will be brought forth, debated, and determined here. We must not get ourselves back into the situation that resulted from hastily conceived and inadequately arrived guidelines in 1984, for which we are now paying a very large price. I cannot believe that was a happy result in the situation.

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, the member must know that with the court decisions, which I know he has studied as carefully as I have, the present environmental guidelines, whatever their inadequacies when they were first initiated, are stronger than the legislation now before the House.

I have a couple of things to which I would like the hon. member who is also the chairman of the Standing Committee on Environment to respond. Does he feel it is correct for the minister to make a statement that a project is necessary before an environmental assessment has been completed when the very question of necessity is the fundamental question of an environmental assessment, looking at alternatives and the necessity for the project?

Second, does he think it is proper that the minister obviously endorses mitigating measures that have gone ahead when the question of mitigating measures is a matter for a full environmental assessment review, not for predetermination?

Third, is he aware of and does he agree with the exemptions to Bill C-78? Does he really mean to pretend, in the face of court decisions that strengthen the guidelines order and their status, that Bill C-78 is an improvement with all its exemptions?

Mr. MacDonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, I will try to keep this very brief. There were a number of questions that my colleague opposite placed. I think the two questions which perhaps are the most important are the comment that she believes Bill C-78 is a weaker version than the guidelines. If that is the position that she has taken, it is certainly not the position I have seen from most of the people who have studied this legislation. Maybe she has another point of view and maybe it can be supported.

I watched very carefully when Bill C-78 was introduced. I had the feeling—and I think the colleague who spoke briefly before her would echo this in terms of her own interpretation—that Bill C-78 is a considerable advance and provides the kind of sound prior knowledge and process that will prevent the situation which we have witnessed here today from developing on another occasion.

This brings me to the final point I want to make in response to the member's question. I find it very strange that she would question the necessity of a project that clearly the people of Saskatchewan and the Government of Saskatchewan have spent many years designing, apart altogether from whether or not it will meet the final test of an environmental assessment. There is no doubt in my mind that the people of Saskatchewan and the Government of Saskatchewan believe that the project is extremely necessary. I hope she is not speaking for her party in saying that it is not.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The time allotted for questions and comments has expired. Resuming debate. Before giving the floor to the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard, I recognize the hon. member for Davenport, and he has 10 minutes.

• (1710)

[English]

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, what this debate has revealed so far by the intervention of the parliamentary secretary this morning, by the minister and now by the member for Rosedale is a severe case of Tory myopia. I will explain. All three have referred to the guidelines that have been interpreted by the courts as being vague, as being confusing, and as being full of uncertainties in their significance.

The reason I am saying that this is a typical case of Tory myopia is that the courts found it possible to interpret these guidelines and to make them mandatory. If there is any uncertainty or ambiguity, it is in the Tory mind which does not seem to be able to accept the fact that the courts have made these guidelines, which they have been deprecating in the course of the debate today, mandatory.