

support of ecological and environmental issues that have been presented to this House.

I say with some disappointment that time and time again this government has said that the environment is not a priority. I say that with a great deal of discouragement because the most recent example was with Kemano II where a secret deal was cut behind closed doors between the previous provincial government and the federal government. It said that while the project called Kemano II was to divert up to 80 per cent of the flow of the Nechako River, one of the major tributaries of the Fraser River system, there would be no requirement for any environmental assessment of that project. This deal was secretly cut behind closed doors. Today we find out that this was done to divert 80 per cent of a major river's flow without any examination of what that meant in terms of environmental or ecological consequences.

I want to say that the hon. member for Skeena has demonstrated a profound dedication to the environment and its preservation for future generations. I remember very well back in June 1992 when the hon. member for Skeena brought forward a motion that would set aside 12 per cent of Canada for parkland development. As a result of his incredible ability as an individual to negotiate with the Minister of the Environment and the environmental critic of the Official Opposition we received unanimous consent for that motion to go forward.

This was, as indicated by a number of American writers and environmentalists, one of the biggest and largest real estate deals in Canadian history. It was to set aside 12 per cent of Canada's land surface for parks so future generations could enjoy that pristine environment. The people of Canada will be forever indebted to my hon. colleague from Skeena. As an individual he has an understanding of ecological and environmental issues second to no one.

I think that all members of the House would agree—I know my friends opposite as well as my friends in Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition would agree—that if there is an individual who has demonstrated over the years not only a profound knowledge and understanding but an insight into ecological and environmental issues then it was the member for Skeena. Time and time again he captivated not only the House of Commons but the

Parliament of Canada and indeed the people of Canada in terms of drawing their attention on critical environmental issues, whether it was acid rain or the ozone issue. I guess it culminated in the creation of the South Moresby Park.

• (1940)

There are all sorts of reasons why this miracle occurred, why a major ecological area of the west coast of Canada was set aside as a park. There are many players in this process. One of the critical players was my hon. colleague from Skeena who was able to stick-handle a very complicated and complex issue into reality. Future generations will be forever grateful to him.

The hon. member for Skeena has demonstrated a commitment to protect and conserve the pristine environments of our country and indeed has demonstrated a profound duty to stand up for not only this generation but for generations to come to ensure that people of the future in our country will have an opportunity to benefit from our pristine environment.

I enthusiastically support this motion. I think the passage of this motion would demonstrate that the government would say: "Yes, we are serious about environmental issues. Yes, we want to provide the public the right to sue government institutions if they fail to protect the environment". Who could vote against this? Who would want to say that conscientious citizens ought not to have the right to sue the government if it acts in ways and means against the environment or if it takes steps that will result in the denigration of our ecological systems?

I am assuming this is going to pass. In closing I want to say that the hon. member for Skeena who lives in a log structure on the Queen Charlotte Islands on the west coast of Canada has demonstrated through his entire lifetime a commitment to the environment and the ecology of the country. He has demonstrated a profound appreciation and understanding of these complex environmental issues that escape others. He has always had the support of his wife Liz and his children, Blair and Katie. He has always demonstrated that he is prepared to go to whatever degree is necessary to represent not only his constituents in the great riding of Skeena, but to represent all Canadians on some of the critical environmental issues confronting us.