

*Government Orders*

[English]

Bill C-78, this government's incredibly incomplete environmental impact assessment bill, this government's view of the way in which a modern society ought to approach the environment, spent five months in committee.

There were briefs presented by environmentalists, by industrialists, by legal organizations, by aboriginal groups, by virtually every segment of Canadian society. Virtually without exception, every single witness opposed the bill.

These were witnesses chosen by ourselves, but also chosen by the government to come and defend its bill. Yet, upon reading, upon sitting there, and upon questioning, they unanimously said that this government has no idea of the way that a modern society ought to evolve in the treatment of the air we breathe and the water we drink.

The reasons that were given ranged from the fact that the bill was vague and incomplete to the fact that it attacked the very integrity of the ecosystem.

A great number of groups presented very serious amendments and they were extensively discussed. Indeed, with the former minister we sat and discussed them. We were told on numerous occasions that the government would be bringing forth amendments.

We were told that the bill would be made whole. We were given promise after promise that the press releases of the government would eventually come to reality, and the bill would be changed.

Appointment after appointment was broken. Amendment after amendment which was promised was never delivered, and there were rumours of cabinet fights, divisions and debates.

Unfortunately, in this government the environment minister does not count for much. Senior ministers, such as the minister of health, the minister of energy, and the minister of foreign trade consistently came in and said: "This Conservative government cares not a whit for the environment".

Now, we find ourselves in the situation we are now in. The bill died on the Order Paper. In its supreme arrogance and lack of understanding, this government comes to us and says: "we would like to reinstate it", of a bill unanimously rejected by the people of Canada.

If there has ever been a government which is out of touch with reality, it is this one. If there has ever been a demonstration of that fact, it is in this government's treatment of Bill C-78.

The premise of the bill, to begin with, is entirely wrong. With the world-wide presentation of the Brundtland report some years ago, the notion of sustainable development became the fundamental principle of environmental assessment. The term "sustainable development" is now learned by children in grades 1, 2 and 3 in every school in every province of this country. Yet, the term "sustainable development", as if the government was afraid to express the words, does not appear once in the bill. If there is any indication of how far behind the thinking of this government is, it is surely that.

There is no modern country that does not understand that it cannot have a sound economy in an unsound environment. There is no modern country that considers the environment to be in opposition to the economy. There is no government, except for this one, that does not understand that the air we breathe, the water we drink and the soil in which our food grows are not free goods; that in depleting them as the country is we are not only devastating the environment but we are devastating our economy.

If you wonder why our health costs are rising, take a look at the air we breathe and the water we drink. If you wonder what is happening, why there is such a huge deficit—if you think the economic deficit is great, I simply ask you to examine the environmental deficit which we are in the process of leaving to our children.

Today's most successful nations—Germany as an example—are nations which understand the total integration of the economy and the environment. Japan, not necessarily a nation known for its environmental awareness, has nonetheless cut its wastage by 42 per cent. It has cut its energy costs by 30 per cent and is now one of the most energy-efficient nations in the world.

Those are environmental objectives. Yet this government seems to wallow in some 1850s philosophy that simply says that we can produce and produce garbage and simply waste resources as if it makes no difference.

Sustainable development is vital to Canada because our economy is so terribly dependent on natural resources. Sustainable development must be the cornerstone upon which modern legislation is built. Therefore, it only stands to reason that sustainable development must be the cornerstone upon which the environmental