

Supply

Mr. Gustafson: Mr. Speaker, if I may answer the member's question, there is a special standing committee which I have been sitting on. The special committee has been hearing witnesses with regard to Bill C-78, which is in fact exactly what he says, the kind of guideline.

What I am saying simply is do not harness this project with the ill-fated guidelines that were brought in by his government in a hurry at the end of the last Liberal administration. They do not work. Let us be fair and move on, EARP the EARP as it were, bring in the reasonable guidelines which are in Bill C-78, which the minister is trying to do and proceed with the project.

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Will the parliamentary secretary tell this House whether he fully supports his Minister of the Environment?

Mr. Gustafson: I was very pleased when at our request and the request of the premier of Saskatchewan, the Minister of the Environment, newly appointed to his position, came to Saskatchewan. We had been asking again and again for someone to come and look at the project, just come and look. He came and looked at the project and he heard from the people.

He has moved ahead on Bill C-78 to bring in those new guidelines. As far as I am concerned, the quicker the better. Let us get on with the project.

Mr. Ray Funk (Prince Albert—Churchill River): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a privilege and an honour to be involved in this debate today.

I think it is a very important debate. In many ways, it has been one of the most substantive debates that many of us have heard. I think the interchange is certainly up and sharp. It is incisive. Also, it has led to some new points of view being put on the table and argument being joined.

In responding to some of the things that the members of the government have said, I would like to say that the member from Souris—Moose Mountain is not what I would consider or describe as one of the political hoods who has been involved in this whole process.

I think he genuinely tries to represent his constituents in a straightforward kind of manner. He has certainly

dealt with me and others among my colleagues in that kind of manner. We have talked about this.

Nevertheless, I think we do have a fundamental difference of opinion in this case. I realize the frustration of his constituents. That certainly is a dry part of the country, there is no question about it. This has been an on and off project, something that has been talked about. Now it is in a pretty active phase for some time.

It is hardly surprising there should be local support for an initiative that presumably would solve some long-standing problems and create some economic activity at a time when there is very little in our province. The rest of the economy is shot.

I think the hon. member should remember too that even in Saskatchewan we have had previous examples when what we assumed to be sound and long talked about projects were completed and they did not turn out to be quite the way we expected them to be.

Certainly the Diefenbaker dam, or the Gardiner dam at Diefenbaker Lake was long anticipated and carefully planned. Nevertheless, the full potential that people envisioned for that particular development has never even come close to being realized in terms of benefits to the agricultural community.

Furthermore, in my own constituency, we have the effects of what used to be popularly called the Squaw Rapids dam, now the E.B. Campbell dam close to Nipawin which it was never envisioned would have any extreme downstream effects.

Nevertheless, it has cleaned out the Cumberland delta, formerly one of the most productive fur and wildlife bearing areas in North America. In fact, it was the site of the first Hudson Bay post. There used to be about 10,000 muskrats trapped every year in that particular area. Now they are lucky if they can get 1,000.

These are the kind of effects that have flowed from previous efforts of dam building in the province. So we have to look at these things carefully. Even documents that are on the record say that if this project had been built in 1912, it would not have filled up until 1946.

There is some question about the environmental soundness, whether a dam of that volume and scale is the proper thing. As my colleague from Regina—Qu'Appelle mentioned, there is some question about the wisdom of building another coal-fired plant at a time when we are supposed to be thinking about CO₂ emis-