

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina—Qu'Appelle): Mr. Speaker, before I ask my colleague a question I do want to make an observation. In terms of the opposition to the Rafferty-Alameda Dam, might I suggest that it was my party, including myself, that first raised it in the House consistently, before the Liberals even began to realize that there was an issue here. The record definitely shows this, if hon. members want to go back and check the record.

I must also say on this, which maybe indicates a difference as well, that the former Liberal critic for the environment, the hon. member for Davenport, and I had joint press conferences, including the Wildlife Federation and so forth, that we took this to be not a topic that we were going to score political points on, but a topic that we were working on together and we were quite anxious and willing to include any Conservative as well. The position we took, and that critic for the Liberal Party at that time, was that the environment is too important to play political games with. Unfortunately, the Liberal Party decided not to reappoint the hon. member for Davenport as its environmental critic and in fact now is playing politics with the environment, and let the record show that as well.

The question I want to ask my colleague is this. In my speech earlier, I quoted Mr. George Hill, who is still the president of the Saskatchewan Power Corporation. In his comments, Mr. George Hill stated how he had been assured by Dr. Good from the environmental department that Dr. Good had complete control over the environmental panel. He could determine pretty well how the panel was going to be operating. Mr. George Hill made some very serious allegations.

We know that the government has introduced Bill C-78, dealing with environmental review. Certainly the bill goes half way in a sense that environmental review will no longer be part of the environment department but will be separated. Mr. George Hill made the allegation in his speech that because right now the environmental review is under the environment department and Mr. Good of the environment department can control pretty well what the environmental review section is doing, while Bill C-78 separates that, still our request and the request of environmentalists is to have the environmental review part report directly to Parliament rather than to the Minister of the Environment to ensure that the environmental review process remains legitimate, remains outside of politics and should be-

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come answerable to Parliament rather than to the minister. Would my colleague agree with that?

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I would agree with that and expand on it in this sense, that I think that wherever possible environmental assessment needs to be taken out of political control, if you like. There is a problem with that as well because what does political mean? When we say out of political control, we mean political in the pejorative or partisan sense of that. I do not want to see it taken out of political control in the sense that larger genuine political questions about value, the nature of development, et cetera, which are political questions in the best sense of what it means to be political, and which at some point in a process need to be considered once the basic biological and physical assessments have been done of any particular project.

I want to say something in response to some of the heckling that I was getting from my colleagues. It is the first time I have ever been heckled and I am very sensitive about it. I was asked whether I had criticized the former NDP government on the public record. Indeed, I have had many occasions, some of them in this House, to criticize not only the Manitoba NDP government but the former Saskatchewan NDP government over their policies with respect to uranium mining. I know that it is strange to Liberals that anybody would get up and express criticism of a government of their own party. But we in the NDP have that kind of freedom of expression and we use it frequently in order to make our positions known.

• (1250)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The time provided for questions and comments has now expired. The Opposition House Leader has the floor.

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, during a debate of this kind, it is customary for a member to be allowed a 20-minute speech, followed by time for questions and comments. The Official Opposition's interest in this Opposition day and in the motion before the House is such that my colleagues asked me to suggest, as has become customary, that we be allowed to split the 20 minutes in two periods of ten minutes, followed by five minutes for questions and comments. Or if you prefer, Mr. Speaker, we will give notice to the Chair that Liberal members wish to have each shared by two speakers. I say this so as not to complicate the task of