

Government Orders

Minister of the Environment chucking dirt back at the Government of Saskatchewan.

The fact is that the environmental assessment panel has resigned. The courts said there had to be an environmental assessment, but we have the two levels of government allowing a project to proceed in direct affront to the court and in direct violation of the law. Precisely the same is going on in relation to the Oldman River dam in Alberta.

As many members of this House will know, in March 1990 the Federal Court of Appeal ruled that Justice Jerome erred in his decision. The court quashed the federal licence to construct and ordered the federal environmental assessment of the project; but that construction continued. The federal government still has not appointed an environmental assessment review panel or an EARP, even though ordered to do so in March by the Federal Court of Appeal.

The federal Minister of the Environment has asked federal justice for a legal opinion on whether he can appoint an EARP while the decision is under appeal. As we know now, that has been sent off to the Supreme Court of Canada. Nothing is in the way of the Minister of the Environment doing what the court had ordered him to do; but he is still not doing it.

We have the two most controversial projects at the moment. On the Rafferty-Alameda, the EARP panel has resigned and no EARP has been reappointed so that it can complete its work before the project is over. In terms of the Oldman, now that the valves have been closed and the reservoir is starting to fill, one of the highest courts in the country, the Federal Court of Appeal, ordered that there be an EARP. The minister still has done nothing to comply with the law. What is the public to think?

Mr. Benjamin: He is in contempt of court.

Mr. Fulton: Of course he is in contempt of court. I suspect he is also in contempt of Parliament. However, that does not seem to matter when it comes to the 1984 cabinet guidelines order even though they have been ruled mandatory. I have all kinds of memoranda from within government, between different agencies, pointing out that it is mandatory and is no longer discretionary.

The government knows it is mandatory, but it is not fulfilling the mandate imposed upon it by the courts.

What is the government doing in relation to Bill C-78? Does it pass the simplest tests, even with the tests placed upon the 1984 guidelines order by the Federal Court and the Federal Court of Appeal? The answer is no. It fails on every test that someone seriously concerned about the environment or sustainable development could possibly put the legislation to.

• (1250)

Referring to the comments of the member for Gander—Grand Falls who spoke a moment ago, for many years it was believed by many members in this House and by many members of the public that the solution to pollution was dilution; you just dump the crap in the river or dump it in a lake. Eighty per cent of the toxic and hazardous wastes produced on a daily basis in Canada is still illegally or improperly disposed of.

Where do you think it is going, Mr. Speaker? It is going into the storm sewers. It is going on farmers' fields. We know in some cases, with some of it, that it goes into peoples' gas tanks. They drive around the city and pump the PCBs out on the street so that the chemical companies do not have to pay to dispose of it properly.

This country and the rest of the world are in desperate need of serious environmental assessment legislation that can assess existing projects.

Forty per cent of the marine pollution in Canada today come from pulp mills. For years we were promised new pulp mill guidelines and regulations by this government; ever since 1984 practically. "Oh, we are going to clean this up. We are going to do something. We are coming forward with it. We will eliminate dioxins. We will eliminate furans. We will do something about all of these other things"; but diddley squat is done and the public is getting madder and madder every day.

I described this bill a moment ago as having been carefully addled with gopher holes. The 18 times it went to cabinet, every time cabinet said: "It ain't loose enough. What if we want to put a nuclear plant in my riding? What if I want to build a dam? What if I want to give a cabinet Order in Council exclusion to my pals from Alcan?" Hey, Montreal headquarters picks up the