

has failed to show he has an understanding of the total picture.

● (1740)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Caouette (Charlevoix): Mr. Speaker, I shall be brief. With regard to the recommendation of Bill C-3, I note that this bill is intended "to protect human health and the environment from the release of substances that contaminate the environment". Throughout the years, many activities—industrial, municipal and individual—have contributed to contaminating the environment, as a result of which health problems have cropped up and some sectors of our environment have been destroyed.

Recently, I wrote to the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Davis) requesting the help of his department to remedy a situation that now exists in my riding where a company, over a period of 40 years, has destroyed all animal life; it has destroyed the salmon that spawned there and contaminated the water. Today, when we ask the federal department to make the efforts required to remedy the situation in the province of Quebec, we are told that this matter does not fall within federal jurisdiction, that it is a provincial matter in the case of Quebec. Now, my intervention this afternoon will be strictly limited to asking the minister to tell us, in his closing remarks on second reading, what means he intends using to apply this act in the province of Quebec. He will have to give us his assurance that the amounts will in fact be transferred to the province of Quebec and spent on projects of the type suggested in Bill C-3. That is the problem in this case, as in many others, when it is decided at some time or other that the province will deal with a certain matter.

I would like to congratulate the minister for introducing that bill which has been called for since a good number of years. Although perhaps too late, it tries nevertheless to correct a problem.

Unfortunately that bill does not refer to the control of the federal government when the enforcement of the legislation is entrusted with a province. This concerns me, because in past cases as in the one I mentioned a while ago, the answers of the provincial government are delayed as for example, the necessary correctives on the north shore where the pollution of a river by a certain company should be checked. Steps to prevent the destruction of animal life are delayed, perhaps due to a lack of agreement between the federal and provincial governments. I therefore hope that in his final speech the minister will indicate what pressures or control he expects to use to see that this legislation is enforced in Quebec.

[*English*]

Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I too want to express the feeling of appreciation that we have on this side of the House for having this bill before us. It is a very, very small step in the marathon walk, but to take this step today is certainly better than to take it a few years from now. It would, of course, have been a lot better had it been taken a few years ago.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a few comments on the remarks that the minister made to

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clear up in my mind how this bill is going to be implemented in Canada.

The minister said that the bill could be compared to legislation existing in other countries and that it is far superior to such legislation. That might be so when we look at Bill C-3 alone and at the controls other countries have to protect their citizens from environmental disasters. But, of course, the bill does not go nearly as far as we would all like it to.

The federal government had a wonderful opportunity years ago, before words like "phosphates", "detergents" and "chlorinated hydrocarbons" became household words, to establish some policies by which Canadians in all walks of life could live. The government was slow in recognizing this new phenomenon. It was so slow in fact that provincial governments throughout the country had to make their own laws to protect their citizens from some of the things that were happening. Because of that we now have all kinds of environmental laws in Canada to which we ask industry, big and small, provinces and municipalities, to adhere. This, of course, is disastrous.

I should have liked to see—and eventually this will have to come about—the minister bring in a bill based on strict guidelines that industry could follow. It can be argued that we do not know today what some of the dangers will be tomorrow and that we want to have a flexible approach to this problem. We do not know what man will invent tomorrow and how harmful that invention might be to people and to society. But I am talking about some of the things that are in existence now, Mr. Speaker. I can only assume that this bill will be like so many others that the government has presented to us, a bill that will regulate retroactively.

It may be true that a lot of industrial concerns intending to invest multimillions of dollars in a new invention and program will go through the pain and trouble to engage either their own engineers and laboratories to research the product or to hire the engineers required to provide the government with this know-how.

What about the smaller industry that is producing a commodity of which we have no knowledge today, Mr. Speaker? They are not compelled to come to the federal government and say that they are producing something and that they do not know what its impact will be. If the minister does not know what is happening, the industry will be in business and the product will be on the market to be consumed by our people. Thus damage will be done and the provisions of the legislation will have to be retroactive.

Ever since we started talking about environmental control there has been conflict between industry and the do-gooders, the environmentalists, the bearded fellows who come out of the concrete jungles where the environment leaves a lot to be desired and go up north to tell us how we should protect the environment. There has always been this conflict between such people and industry. Industry does not want to be difficult but they find it hard to live with all these unknown factors.

Such questions arise as: Suppose we put a cleaning plant at the end of this pipe, will there be some federal, municipal or provincial agent around tomorrow wanting us to