

*Government Orders*

Instead of building up confidence, this type of legislation will do just the opposite. It will pull away confidence and make people feel that somehow or another they will be made more vulnerable to the whims of a federal government.

Why do we need a strong federal government to play a role here? In some respects it is one of the odd curiosities of what is happening in this debate in the last three or four years. It is the reason why we have edged toward this piece of legislation. As weak as it is at least it is the first step. It gives something to debate. We are sure the minister will contribute to the various committees and state in detail what is wanted. We have reached this stage because ironically the federal government has refused to act. It is the courts that have produced some action on some projects in western Canada.

• (1650)

The reason why we turn to the federal government is that we have come to realize that the provincial governments are proponents of industries such as the hydro-electric industry and of the biggest projects ongoing in Canada. As a result, it is in their interest to get projects on stream as quickly and cheaply as possible. They are not prepared, from anything that we have seen, to protect the environment.

One of the interesting quotes used in the House—and some members may remember this earlier in the debate—was the quote of the member for Winnipeg—Transcona. He said that he was very sorry that the NDP provincial government in Manitoba, in the mid-eighties, did not see the damage that to be done by the Rafferty-Alameda dam.

It does not matter which party is in power. There are dangers involved which have to be addressed for every party. No party, no matter what is its claim to fame in this House, has a provincial wing which does not understand the importance of the environment. It is important that the member recognize that his brothers at the provincial level are just as likely to make errors as those of another party. I am sure he will be vigilant in watching the provincial Government of Ontario to make sure it does not make similar errors; for example, that it will respond quickly to the crisis in the Montreal River area.

The provincial governments are taking this in any way, shape or form in a passive fashion. The provincial governments have been meeting to discuss the environ-

mental review process because they know there is a lot at stake for themselves.

For example, on Thursday, April 19, representatives from Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Quebec, Ontario, and Nova Scotia met in Vancouver to develop a strategic response regarding the proposed federal Environmental Assessment Act and to try to see what moves they should be making to prevent the federal government from establishing greater authority in this domain. They asked the province of Manitoba before the election—and so it is not being discussed in a public fashion—to prepare a memo organizing the provinces against this federal intervention. What they wanted to try to establish is that the provincial jurisdiction must be domain and that the act must contain provisions for joint reviews based on a formula in which they could participate and which they can determine.

What the provinces have been looking for and what we must guard against when we are dealing with them—and hopefully they will come forward as witnesses in front of the House of Commons—is a grandfather clause for projects that are either under way or have previously been reviewed by a provincial process. In other words, there is a basic conflict that provincial governments are not willing to accept federal authority. We must make sure that the federal authority which is being established is tough and determined enough to establish environmental rules that will withstand the pressure from the provinces.

If this process were in place in 1984 or 1986 when this particular government started to discuss it, would the Rafferty-Alameda dam project have happened? My response is that this process is so weak that that project would have still happened. The reason why I say that is that in the end the minister still has the ability to intervene at the last minute and accept or reject the recommendations from this agency. This is not arm's length in the sense of being independent and being able to say for sure this project cannot go. This is in fact a very weak use of the words environment assessment.

Another issue that needs to be addressed when looking at this legislation is what is going to happen in the international domain. We find the legislation is silent on this issue. Canada spends billions of dollars a year offshore in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific Rim. Through CIDA and other development agencies such as the Petro-Canada International corporation governed by External Affairs, it gets itself involved in a number of