

Government Orders

A new public health study suggests that lower mainland residents are getting sick and even dying from air pollution. The study is part of an unprecedented \$10 million. It is yet another study, by the way. A multi-disciplinary research effort in the Fraser Valley last summer looked at what happened to the lungs of 58 farm workers from Matsqui and Abbotsford who worked long hours outdoors. That is when pollutants from tailpipes and smokestacks combine in sunlight to form a powerful lung irritant called ground level ozone pollution, the same smog that plagues car choked Los Angeles.

I could go on but I see my time is running out. It is important to emphasize to government that while the bill addresses the new projects, and that is great, there is a bigger responsibility. There are a lot of pollutants. There are a lot of things that must be addressed that exist today in Canada. I ask the government to look at those as well.

Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Fraser Valley West for his support for the bill before us today. I would like to inform him that the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development will be in his part of the world one month from now. We will be holding public hearings in Vancouver on December 1, 2 and 3. At the urging of his hon. colleague, the member for Comox—Alberni, we will be examining some of the issues that he raised in the House this afternoon, particularly the condition of water in the Fraser Valley River estuary. If there is a link between the condition of air quality, the smog that he referred to and the chemicals that are emitted into the atmosphere by various activities in his region, we will have an opportunity to look at that as well.

• (1720)

The Liberal administration in Parliament is certainly moving swiftly along the track that he is recommending this afternoon.

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, that is good news. I would suggest the committee has its hearings outside and breathe a little of the unfiltered air. Maybe that will move it on a bit. Perhaps the committee might even want to bring one of the Bloc members to see that other parts of Canada have similar problems to those in Quebec.

I have another point. The regulations by which we all live, the law or the legislation, are being changed. I trust members of the group that is coming to the Fraser Valley will enlist comments from ordinary residents and get a bit away from the lobby groups. I understand that is important, but they also need to talk to the people who own the houses that are dirty now. They need to talk to the people who are affected, such as farmers. They need to talk to the people who drink that rotten water out there with the nitrates in it.

They really should not surface scratch the issue. They have to go a little deeper and get down to where the problems really are. I hope this is not just another cursory discussion in a community. I will be there and I will be asking some questions along with a whole bunch of regular folk.

Mr. Paul DeVillers (Simcoe North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question for the member concerns his comments about yet another study. It is a refrain that we frequently hear from members of his party. Yet when he is advised a committee would be going to his riding he seems to be quite supportive. I wonder if he could explain the inconsistency in that approach for us.

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, I cannot stop the government from undertaking timely and wasteful studies. I doubt very much whether it even looked at the Conservative studies that were undertaken on the matter before.

There is no question about how much money the government wastes. If I am stuck with a group coming in to talk, I am stuck with it. This is a majority government and we cannot stop it. However I can tell the member that when he comes to the town where I live there will be people asking questions. The government is going to get its dollars worth out of our town because we have a lot to say.

They spend a lot of money over there on studies, grants and whatnot, but this time they will earn their money when they come to our town.

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a couple questions which I will put individually to the hon. member.

I was quite pleased to hear that he and his party support the principle of polluter pay. It is something that I have supported for quite some time. It was refreshing to hear that the hon. member supports the concept as well.

I am wondering, given his respect for the Criminal Code, if he is prepared to take the issue of polluter pay one step further. There has been talk over the years of adding crimes against the environment as a new section of the Criminal Code and applying Criminal Code type penalties and approaches to crimes against the environment. I am wondering if the member would also support that principle.

• (1725)

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, actually it is Reform Party policy that we would go further than fines for polluters. I am not sure at this point how far in the Criminal Code we would take it. I am sure it is going to be a subject for debate within our own party.

The fact is that fines to major corporations make about as much sense at times as the fines given to drug pushers. Many drug pushers today get \$2,000 fines. They turn around and go out and sell whatever they are selling, heroin or crack. They