

### *Government Orders*

The existing EARP guidelines order says, and I quote:

These guidelines shall apply to any proposal that may have an environmental effect on an area of federal responsibility.

Clearly the conditions in this bill are weaker than those in the old legislation. Time prohibits a detailed analysis of every clause in the bill, but I think the point has been made. Bill C-78 does not satisfy the legislative requirements necessary to protect our environment. Public interest and public concern in environmental matters are so great at present that environmental impact assessment has to be a priority item for this or any other government.

In view of the importance and the urgency of environmental impact legislation, we cannot be satisfied with an imprecise, toothless piece of legislation such as the bill presently before us. While regulations required to implement the bill have not yet been drafted, we really have very little idea of the scope of the legislation.

When the Cabinet has such wide-ranging discretionary powers so as to say just "trust us", we do not have a legitimate bill. We are putting the onus on environmental groups and concerned individuals to create such a hue and cry on every issue that the government would have to react.

There are simply too many discretionary situations in this bill. Granted, many of the "mays" in the old guidelines order have been replaced by "wills". However, we now have expressions such as, and I quote, "where deemed appropriate" and "in the opinion of the responsible authority". These types of Cabinet discretionary powers are not acceptable in an area of such vital importance to all Canadians.

The degree and the ferocity of the condemnation of this bill is really not surprising. Highly reputable groups have unanimously rejected this bill. The Saskatchewan Action Foundation for the Environment says the proposed legislation intends to completely eviscerate the laws of Canada as they presently exist under the EARP guidelines order as interpreted in the Rafferty-Alameda and subsequent cases; and the foundation goes on to say that in fact, a comparison of the legislation to the briefing documents issued by the federal government discloses that the government is saying something and doing exactly the opposite.

The Manitoba Environmentalists Inc. says the legislation needs a major overhaul. They say "there are so many problems with this bill it needs a virtual rewrite. The intent of this bill is to return environmental assessment to yesteryear". Not a very good recommendation.

A conference of experts which met in Ottawa in early October harshly criticized the proposed legislation. Elizabeth Swanson of the Alberta Environmental Law Center said: "This legislation will undo everything that has been achieved in recent court decisions".

In addition to all of this, on Tuesday of this week the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, a group established by the government in March, 1989, made public its advice to the Prime Minister on how to strengthen the new environmental assessment reform package. Key to their report was an emphasis on public participation in all phases of the assessment process. Public confidence in the process has to be established and above all the government must be accountable to the public for its entire environmental assessment operation.

The evidence is overwhelming. This bill does not meet the expectations of the people of Canada. It does not measure up to the expectations of its own appointed environment and economy committee. It is so seriously flawed that it should be withdrawn and redrafted, or the government must be prepared to accept major amendments in committee. Their track record in accepting opposition amendments does not lead me to expect very much in this regard.

• (1610)

**Mr. Lee Clark (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member referred to the need to define sustainable development in terms of the Brundtland commission as an appropriate location for such a definition.

I wonder if he would address himself to the second paragraph in the bill where it says:

Whereas environmental assessment provides an effective means of integrating environmental factors into planning and decision-making processes in a manner that ensures that present needs are met without compromising the ability to meet the needs of future generations;