

• (1050)

The reason I say that is that there continues to be many people who hold high office in both the public and private sector who do not know such simple things as the fact that the Pacific Ocean has already risen in direct relation to global warming. People do not seem to stay abreast of these kinds of gigantic, ecological phenomena that are now scientifically known to a certain extent and understood. It is similar to the ozone hole, a very recent issue here in this House.

Should it not be the case that all of the government's policies related to the potential impact of CFCs or other ozone depleting substances undergo scrutiny? We know about it. We were warned in this House by the Minister of the Environment to be careful with our children and to be careful with children generally to keep them out of the sun because of the potential for increased depletion of the ozone over much of Canada later this year. It is not in the legislation now. We are just about to take a vote on a piece of legislation and it is relatively easy already to find areas of incredible weakness within the legislation already.

What about species loss. Mr. Speaker, I know you know about the issue of a loss of one acre every five seconds of forest land in Canada. Most people do not reflect on the rate of loss of forested land in this country. It is the kind of thing that should be clearly delineated in a piece of legislation like this.

It is only through amendments, such as that proposed by the Minister of the Environment, the member for Davenport and my colleague from The Battlefords—Meadow Lake, that we can constructively assure ourselves and the public that we will be able on a regularized basis to update legislation that is needed to address the largest single issue that we face, which is how to get the economy of this country and the economy of the world linked into sustainable development in its truest sense, which is sustainable habitat and some kind of steady state economics that does not have the kind of increasingly fast-moving, negative entropy that we are seeing right now, not only in the developing world, but in the most advanced countries where, the general environment and general consequences of a declining environment are affecting the populations in those countries.

Government Orders

I have spoken about the speed with which we have seen the change from 1974 until today, and that is a very short period of time. Many pieces of legislation do not have to be redrafted and changed as often. The bulk of changes that we have seen in relation to the assessment procedures from the 1984 cabinet guidelines EARP have come from court decisions. I do not think that this piece of legislation of itself is going to slow down the number of times that the public are still going to be seeking some kind of assistance from the courts.

I see you preparing to rise to support the brilliance of the amendment by my friend from The Battlefords—Meadow Lake, Mr. Speaker, so I will take this somewhat unique opportunity to sit down now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I just want to bring to the attention of hon. members again relevancy, particularly to this motion. I appreciate the hon. member winding up by giving us an overview of the whole bill again, but I think it is important that we do get down to the nitty-gritty of the motions, please.

Ms. Lynn Hunter (Saanich—Gulf Islands): Mr. Speaker, I would like to also commend my colleague, the member for The Battlefords—Meadow Lake, on bringing forth this amendment. It is an important amendment and an important addition to Bill C-13.

We have to remember that Bill C-13 is being brought forward and we are debating this just two and a half months in advance of the earth summit in Brazil.

Canada has an opportunity to have the best environmental assessment legislation in the world. That is what we are trying to do. My colleague from The Battlefords—Meadow Lake in committee tried to put forth some positive additions to the legislation and the legislation, to the government's credit, has been altered because of those interventions by both the member for The Battlefords—Meadow Lake and the member for Davenport.

However, having said that, I think that we all have to be reminded to have a little humility in this process. Although the bill is very much improved from the former bill, Bill C-78, it is not perfect. As I said yesterday, the search for protection is sometimes the enemy of the good.

What has occurred in the last five years in reaction to a vacuum in environmental assessment legislation has been a series of very expensive court challenges, not just to the communities involved but to the industries putting forth. It is also expensive to the government, the