

Canadian Environmental Protection Act

by preparing a good Bill. They should now shut up. This is what more and more Canadians are asking them to do.

Mr. Keeper: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to reply to my capitalist friend across the aisle. I should like to add that this capitalist colleague of mine says his caucus has taken part in this debate. However, I have noted today that not one Conservative Member has asked to speak before me. A Liberal Member spoke but afterwards, not a sound was heard from the benches of the capitalist Conservative Members. I want to hear the great capitalists in this House. Mr. Speaker, I want the legislation to be improved. If you want this legislation to be passed by the House, you have to take part in the debate and state your reasons. This is the intent of the House. However, my capitalist colleague said that the Minister from Manitoba, our Minister of the Environment, talked about the harmony that exists between environment and industry. It is true. This is the value we are advocating in this House but no harmony achieved at any cost. We should be ready to set standards so that the industry will not keep on polluting the environment.

I should like to reply to the comments of my capitalist colleague on free trade.

I am against free trade if this new commitment, if any, will reduce our environmental standards in Canada to the same level as in the United States where the President will not acknowledge the problem of acid rain.

With respect to acid rain, I should like to know if my capitalist friend agrees with the President of the United States, Mr. Ronald Reagan. Is it the reason why he supports the free trade concept?

• (1310)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The time for questions and comments has now terminated. Is the House ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Fort Garry (Mr. Axworthy) wishes to speak?

Mr. Axworthy: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Fort Garry.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I understand your natural confusion because you would automatically look to your right to see what kind of response members of the Government would be making to this important Bill. The fact that there are no such speakers prepared to defend their legislation is certainly justification for the slight lapse in recognition. I am very pleased you were able to adjust very quickly and to realize that members of the

Opposition are certainly very much interested in environmental protection even though members of the Government apparently are not.

An Hon. Member: Who presented the Bill?

Mr. Axworthy: That is part of the problem. The Government presented a Bill which does not really provide environmental protection. I always try to be fair and balanced in my comments in this House—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Axworthy: Certainly, some Members of the House of Commons acknowledge that fact. Therefore, I would like to provide complimentary words as well. This is a wonderful piece of camouflage. It is great cosmetics. It is a wonderfully constructed subterfuge. However, I do not think it is going to do much to protect the environment. It is reorganizing, rearranging and consolidating agencies and Departments, but what does that have to do with the fundamental causation of environmental spoilage in this country and elsewhere?

The legislation ignores the the most serious fundamental responsibility of any Government, and that is to provide for implementation and enforcement of controls, rules and laws. When one looks in this Bill to find the so-called teeth, to see the kind of clear and effective penalties, and application of those penalties, one is obviously disappointed.

We should not be surprised because we have seen in the past three years a serious avoidance by this Government of the hard issues of environment. I would not want to throw this House into a fit of unrestrained laughter if I tried to talk about the Government's record in dealing with acid rain. We all know the record there. We have been treated to the grand parade, the drums and symbols of the United States President being ushered into the House of Commons to announce a significant breakthrough that he and the Prime Minister of Canada (Mr. Mulroney) arrived at a deal on acid rain.

The mimeograph machine and the electronic parliamentary networks were all churning out the message to the Canadian people: "Don't worry, the problem has been solved". That is until we found out just a little more than a week ago that indeed it was not only a total and complete mistake but it was a series of miscalculations, and it was portrayed as such. That is part of the problem. There is no shame in this kind of environmental protection by public relations. It is as if somehow the imagination of the PR flacks on the government side is sufficient reason for Canadians to be confident that something will be done about the environment. That seems to be about the only serious recourse to action with which we have been greeted.

It has taken three years to come out with this whimper of a Bill, this modest gesture which is simply a shuffling of a few departmental responsibilities and co-ordinations without really