

Government Orders

ly the only solace that the Canadian population can take in this is that the next government it elects to sit on the other side of the House and support the will and the needs of the people is going to be a government which cares about the people, understands democracy and will produce what the people want.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister McLaughlin we expect that is exactly what will be delivered.

The matter has seriously been addressed by my colleague from Kamloops and by other members who have spoken today. I want to add a few words specifically about one of the bills included in this list before us. That is specifically Bill C-78, the environmental assessment legislation, which I consider to be the most important piece of legislation that this government could deal with either now or in the future.

We are trying to deal with that legislation now. We had dealt with a considerable amount of witnesses' testimony and work that was put into Bill C-78 in the previous session. I am totally surprised that the government would seek to reintroduce Bill C-78 as if no testimony and no work had been done on that legislation. Virtually every witness who appeared before the committee argued strongly—and I was on that committee—for substantial amendments to Bill C-78. Almost every witness who appeared before us provided us with many pieces of paper containing strongly worded, very technical amendments to Bill C-78.

I brought with me today just one-third of the briefs of witnesses' testimony that appeared before us.

• (1730)

These were witnesses such as the West Coast Environmental Law Association, the Canadian Bar Association, the Rassion Academy of Aquatic Science, the Canadian Environmental Law Association, the Sierra Club, the Canadian Wildlife Federation, and a whole host of others.

They were witnesses who came to us and not only said that this bill needed amendment but suggested the amendments to us.

I am quite surprised that the government decided to reintroduce this bill because even members of the

department were indicating that the bill would have to be amended.

I am not normally a betting man, but I am willing to bet that when this bill comes back before us the government is going to make some amendments to it because of the evidence that it has heard and agreed to.

This was an ideal opportunity for this government. It was an opportunity which it has completely missed, an opportunity to take the wealth of information that was presented to us, to review Bill C-78 in the context in which this evidence was presented and redraft the most important bill that this Parliament is going to have to deal with, rewrite it and present it to us in a new form, a form that perhaps the members of the opposition could accept and deal with quickly because of its importance.

Is the government going to take the opportunity given to it with the proroguing of Parliament? No. It is going to sit back and, in the lazy-handed way that it has dealt with this legislation so far, it is simply going to throw it back on the table and then take its lumps on it.

There are going to be a lot of lumps on this one, because you cannot compromise on the environment in Canada. The people of Canada and certainly the New Democratic Party are not going to sit here and allow this to happen without expressing concern.

Bill C-78 is a fatally flawed piece of legislation and it has been told to us, as I indicated, by many who appeared before us.

I have a couple of comments that I want to put on record from the Canadian Environmental Law Reports. They relate to an article that appeared in the March 1991 issue, written by Ted Schrecker who, according to this, is with the Department of Political Science at the University of Western Ontario.

He talks about the substantial need to amend the bill as well, arguing that the legislation in front of us is actually weaker than the environmental guidelines which have caused this government such incredible distress over the course of the last year on things such as the Rafferty-Alameda dam in Saskatchewan, the Oldman River in Alberta, and the James Bay II project in northern Quebec.