

Canadian Environmental Protection Act

An Hon. Member: They are ashamed of their record.

Mr. Riis: The Government is ashamed of its record, no question. The Government now wants to muzzle and curtail debate and invoke closure.

Mr. Shields: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We just moved a motion to extend hours so the debate could continue. The Hon. Member and his Party refused that offer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): That is not a point of order. I believe the Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap (Mr. Riis) was questioning or commenting with regard to Bill C-74. If Hon. Members want to discuss House business, I would appreciate it if they would do so outside the Chamber.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that with such a large majority the Government cannot manage the business of the House in a more productive and businesslike way. That is another problem for another debate, as you have indicated, Mr. Speaker.

One of the proposals which the New Democratic Party originally put forward in 1980 with the previous administration and now with the Progressive Conservative Government was the suggestion that we ought to take steps to move low sulphur coal from eastern British Columbia, western Alberta and Saskatchewan to provide coal for Ontario Hydro.

Mr. Shields: We are working on it.

Mr. Riis: The Hon. Member for Athabasca (Mr. Shields) said the Government is working on it. The Conservatives have been in Government now for almost four years and we ought to have seen some progress.

The trade deal which the Government is about to sign would make it impossible to strike an arrangement that would transfer coal from the West for Ontario Hydro. The thousands of jobs it would create are very important, but today the issue that is important would be the environmental implications of that transfer of coal. If that coal were to be moved from western Canada to Ontario Hydro, it would be lower in sulphur than the present coal that is imported from the United States. Consequently, the creation of acid rain would be significantly reduced as a result of the burning of that western coal.

I have a question for the Member who is concerned about environmental issues. When it comes to fighting acid rain—we have not seen a single initiative of any substance by the Government yet—why does not a representative of the Government rise today and say, “We are committed to moving low sulphur western coal which will create thousands of jobs for Canadians and result in a significant reduction in acid rain in Canada”, rather than prolonging the discussion year after year after year and taking no action? Eventually a trade deal with the United States will prohibit the Government from ever making that announcement.

[Translation]

Mr. Grisé: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap (Mr. Riis) is accusing this Government of trying to muzzle the Opposition, while in fact, the exact opposite is

happening, because when I personally moved a motion to extend the debate today, fifteen Members of the New Democratic Party rose to object to the motion. There were also six Liberals, Mr. Speaker. Was it . . .

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I am going to bring to the attention of the Hon. Member that he should not indicate the number of people in the House. I hope he will just put his question or make a comment.

Mr. Grisé: Mr. Speaker, I am going directly to the point; and I want to thank you for your comments.

[Translation]

So I was saying, Mr. Speaker, that we really want to continue this debate, and that is why we moved the motion. As for the most important part of the question asked by the Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap (Mr. Riis) . . .

[English]

As far as the transfer of coal from British Columbia to Ontario Hydro is concerned, there is some activity now for the transfer of coal from B.C. to Ontario Hydro, and it is my understanding that this will improve in the coming months.

As for the comments of the Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap (Mr. Riis)—

[Translation]

. . . he says he is concerned about the impact of the free trade agreement on the environment. Mr. Speaker, obviously, the only favourable impact the free trade agreement has, as far as the NDP is concerned, is on the electoral district of Oshawa.

[English]

There is nowhere else. The only place where free trade is good for the NDP is in Oshawa.

[Translation]

Mr. Nystrom: Mr. Speaker, I also have a question for the Hon. Member for Chambly (Mr. Grisé). I too have often spoken from my side against the Reagan-Mulroney Accord. It is not good at all for Saskatchewan and all families where I come from are against it as are all families in Quebec. As the Hon. Member knows, I know Mr. Jacques Proulx, president of the UPA, very well, and he is opposed to the Accord. The Hon. Member for Bellechasse (Mr. Blais) attended a meeting of the UPA only a few months ago. But, Mr. Speaker, that is not at all the debate here; the issue is free trade, it is the environment and our Prime Minister said that he had a special relationship with Mr. Reagan. He often spoke about acid rain. But the Prime Minister suffered a great failure, because he did not at all convince the President of the United States to come up with something positive on acid rain. Perhaps the Hon. Member across the way could explain to the House why the Conservative policy on acid rain, which is so important for Quebec and throughout Canada, was a big failure. Despite the special relationship between the Prime Minister and Mr. Reagan, two very conservative gentlemen, there was a big failure. Why?