

Government Orders

nations licensed by the Government of Canada through the Department of External Affairs.

We went through that two years ago and last year. Now we know what the government was up to. It was up to passing something that really did not mean all that much. As an example, and I am just using it as an example, now the Government of Canada can come along and say: "By a majority vote, we are going to bring back a bill introduced two years ago that went through all those stages and we are now going to take that and have it marked 1991 as if it has passed all the stages again in 1991 that took place two years ago."

The entire framework of the passage of legislation and the accountability of the government to the people of Canada have suffered an incredible blow by this decision of the Government of Canada. Somebody can ask today a legitimate question: Why do we have a Speech from the Throne? The Speech from the Throne outlines the legislative program. Why do we have mechanisms in place to protect the people of Canada against bad legislation? Now that all goes down the drain because the Government of Canada, by using its majority, can say: "We will bring back a bill from last year, from two years ago, from six years ago, from 20 years ago, from 50 years ago" because we see dissolution under the rules of procedure going back to Erskine May. The rules of procedure always dealt with dissolution and prorogation in the same paragraph. That is the way it is presented. Everything on the Order Paper comes to an end.

There has only been one exception to that and that was when there was unanimous consent, and this dates back quite a number of years. Everybody concerned in the House of Commons was saying: "Well, we have gone through all of these hearings on a particular bill and everybody really wants this bill, it is good for Canada, it is good for us, so let us all agree now to bring it back at the same stage as we had it before." That is legitimate. It is a legitimate use of the majority vote of the House of Commons.

The House of Commons can do anything it wants with a majority vote. This motion, which deals with five bills before the House of Commons, is not a legitimate use of the authority of the majority of the House of Commons and it strikes another blow against the accountability

function of the House of Commons on behalf of the people of Canada.

• (1650)

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise in this House to speak against a motion to reinstate a series of legislation which in its content and substance is inept and incompetent.

I am especially pleased to do so following upon my colleague who is not only one of the finest orators in this House, but undoubtedly one of the finest orators in this country. What he has said about this motion and the specific pieces of legislation contained therein were comments with which I am sure all Canadians, certainly all Newfoundlanders, would agree and stand proud to be with him.

I will use Bill C-78 as the specific example of why this motion should not pass, why this legislation should not be reinstated, why it should be allowed to die on the Order Paper, as indeed under the proper legislative process it should be allowed to do so if this government had any understanding of what democracy was all about.

[*Translation*]

I am pleased to speak to the motion for the reinstatement of Bill C-78 concerning the environmental assessment process. The very principle of environmental assessment is the basis of a new perception of our global ecosystem whose resources are not unlimited.

According to the Brundtland Report, the environmental assessment process plays a key role in the search for sustainable development. I unconditionally support the principle of an environmental assessment legislation in Canada.

However, Mr. Speaker, Bill C-78 is so flawed it will in fact undermine our existing standards for environmental assessment.

As Steven Hazel, from the Canadian Arctic Committee, said, and I quote: "With Bill C-78, Canada now has environmental guidelines that have the force of law and a bill that is no more than a set of guidelines".

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, Mr. Hazel is right and that is why I am against this bill being sent back to committee.