

*Government Orders*

• (1610)

[English]

**Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to speak on Bill C-48, an act to establish the Department of Natural Resources and related acts.

We do not have any significant problems with the bill at present, so I will use this time to expand on some ideas on natural resource management that our party would like to put forward to help improve this very important aspect of our country.

Canada has a number of resources, both human and natural. Being so large and so rich in so many of these resources, it is critically important that we manage them properly. Our natural resources, including fish, lumber, mining and water, are extensive. Few countries in the world can claim to be as rich as we are in natural resources. In fact the standard of living of all Canadians is intimately associated with these resources.

Natural resources are under siege, as they are in every other country in the world. What we do now is critically important in how these resources survive in the future. I would first like to deal with the latter, our natural resources, and go through some of the specific principles that we need to apply to them to ensure they will survive in the future for coming generations. I would also like to deal with some specific problems, in particular some of the problems affecting where I live in British Columbia.

First and foremost, the most important principle in natural resources is sustainable development. Much damage has already been done by the generations that preceded us and the current generation in dealing with our natural resources.

Everybody hears much about the ozone depletion, about the decrease in biodiversity that has occurred all over the world, from the flora and the fauna, the well known animals and plants now being affected such as the tigers and black rhino to the lesser known plants that are being decimated and wiped off the face of the planet every day.

As an aside, this lack of biodiversity is a huge loss to us as a species. For within that wealth of biodiversity exists a potential for those species that have become extinct that will never be explored, a potential we can use in industry, in medicine to save lives, to help our species and other species on the planet.

Desertification has occurred as a result of the mismanagement of our natural resources. A wide swath is gone all over our world that has rendered arable land into deserts. Land that was once productive now is not and never will be again, at least not in our lifetimes. It will never be able to produce the food stuffs,

the agriculture, the homes that the people of the world need and that our burgeoning population will require.

As a country we have been very guilty of deforestation in the past. We have criticized Brazil for its deforestation practices, but we have been as guilty as them. Much has been done over the last few years to undo this, in part because of the loud outcry and the interest of the Canadian people, but also because of special interest and environmental groups that have come on side to help be watchdogs for what has gone on in our natural resources.

Pollution plays a very important part because various aspects of pollution are decimating areas that we will forever have to live with on land, in lakes, water bodies and in the Arctic. All we need do is talk to the aboriginal people that live in the north to know what horrible things have happened to the pristine areas that once existed in our north.

• (1615)

This is not something that is only specific to our country, but to all of the countries that share the Arctic borders. Pollution is rampant. Foodstuffs are going down and they too are being polluted. It is happening all over. Toxic wastes are being dumped. All these things are occurring now and need to be addressed now for, as I said before, what we do at this moment will forever impart on future generations. Things are not getting better.

Look at the acidification that has been occurring in the Great Lakes. Where I used to live in Ontario, thousands and thousands of beautiful lakes that used to have such an enormous resource of fish are dying. There is a wasteland of lakes in Ontario and in Quebec that has been rendered useless because of the acidification and the dumping of acid rain into these lakes, a profound tragedy, lakes that now it is too late to do anything about.

Perhaps if we address this problem now, in the future we can get a handle on it and prevent this from happening and do things to bring them back to the state that they were once in.

We should also like to address another aspect that is not often discussed in natural resources, that is the burgeoning world population, a population that now stands at 5.7 billion and in a mere 37 years will double to over 10 billion people. It is interesting to note that it has taken the entire history of man to get to our current stage of 5.7 billion but it will only take 37 years to double that.

I ask everybody to consider what will happen to the future of our population and our world when that population doubles. When that happens we will have an increase in the demand on our resources, an increase in the demand on our natural resources, on our environment and on our security. A broadened definition of security, we are now finding, will include our military security, our environmental security and our social security.