

We are simply falling further and further behind no matter how many people we put into this substance by substance approach. It is not a workable solution. We have to find another approach and I think it has to be that people who are going to be using chemicals have to demonstrate that they are not harmful to the environment.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** Questions and comments are now terminated. Debate.

**Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of my Party and discuss Bill C-74, the Environmental Protection Act. I believe that the environment issue will crop up in any public opinion poll which tries to determine what is of fundamental concern to Canadians across the country. Concern for preserving and promoting what is essentially a great national jewel is very much a centre-piece of their thoughts. It crosses all lines, be it age, region or cultural background. It strikes a chord in the public's sensitivity to the environment. It is viewed quite correctly as a national heritage which ought to be protected and preserved, not only for our well-being today but for the enjoyment and well-being of those who follow us.

A clean environment is also of great concern because many Canadians perceive pollution as perhaps being irreversible. If it can be corrected, obviously it is going to be at a tremendous cost. Therefore, Canadians think of the environment in a proactive rather than reactive sense. If we react too lightly, not only will it be a great drain on our resources at all three levels of Government, but by the time you develop the political will to combat an environmental problem or hazard, it might be too late. Therefore, the feeling is that now is the best time to do something to protect our environment and correct the problems.

People feel that now is the time to protect the soil which grows our food. Now is the time to protect our rivers and lakes before the damage caused by acid rain, for example, is irreversible. Now is the time to protect our water supply and treat it as a national resource. That is what it is when you compare our water supply with that in other parts of the world.

When they look at our mountains, lakes and forests, Canadians want us as legislators to put in place legislation which will provide effective leadership at the federal level through national standards. Whether you live in British Columbia, northern Ontario, or Atlantic Canada, we must have one standard and one philosophy guiding this great country with respect to the environment. We cannot have environmental legislation which allows the provinces or municipalities to opt out so that you have an environment which is actively protected and enhanced in British Columbia, let us say, and less so in Ontario.

If you accept the premise of my remarks, Mr. Speaker, and I believe you and most Members of this House would, we have to ask ourselves how Bill C-74 fits in with those values and principles which we attach to the protection and enhancement

### *Canadian Environmental Protection Act*

of our environmental backyard. The Minister of the Environment (Mr. McMillan), in presenting Bill C-74, suggested to Canadians that this is the toughest environmental legislation ever introduced in the western hemisphere. Those were his very words, yet over the last number of months he withdrew some of his own amendments and allowed other amendments by government Members which weakened the legislation. In that respect, his words melt like snow on a hot summer's day. If they were ever true, they are no longer true. This legislation should not be heralded as the premier legislation of the western world. That is empty boasting at best. Because of those changes I mentioned it is a weakened, battered and tired piece of legislation. It certainly does not do justice to the press releases being put out by the Government and Minister.

There are a number of different aspects to this situation which give rise to the fragility of this legislation. The first is that this legislation does not—

• (1620)

**Mr. Benjamin:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I apologize to the hon. gentleman for interrupting him. However, of 282 Members I count seven in the House. I ask that you please take a quorum count.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** I do not see a quorum. Please ring the bells.

*And the bells having rung:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** I do now see a quorum.

**Mr. Marchi:** Mr. Speaker, I must thank my colleague from the New Democratic Party for inviting more Members to participate in this debate and to listen to my remarks on Bill C-74.

I was just getting to what I think is the first fallacy of Bill C-74, namely, that there is no commitment by the Government or the Minister to try to clean up the current environmental mess. They were prepared to try to regulate toxic materials through industry, but there was no concerted effort or political will to deal with regulatory bodies which in the past have contributed to a number of serious pollution indicators. They are willing to let that go by and try to prevent it in the future.

Our environmental spokesperson, the Member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia), has been an advocate and champion of environmental concerns. His position and that of the Liberal Party is to try to prevent environmental pollution from occurring in the future while recognizing that we must determine now to clean up many parts of our community rather than trying to pass the political buck to future Governments. It is a very serious fallacy for the Government to try to prevent future pollution without acting on existing problems.

The second disturbing aspect of Bill C-74 is that the public was only partially consulted. The provinces closed themselves behind locked doors with the federal Government and the