

case it is supposed to be the protector of the environment, such as in the case of the Rafferty-Alameda dam. In other cases it is just being a bystander, such as what happened in northern Manitoba.

Then in the other corner we have the provinces that are proponents of many big projects in this country. Some people estimate the total value of projects on the drawing boards in each of provinces to be somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$14 billion. Obviously a tremendous amount of wealth is at stake.

In the third corner is something we never had there before in this triangle. It is the courts. We have had to keep going back to the courts: the federal government to sue a provincial government, environmentalists to sue the federal government, environmentalists and citizens to sue provincial governments, private corporations to protect their interests, and environmentalists to take on the private corporations. Through this litigation and the lack of legislation we have had no resolve, no sense of a protection of the environment. Canadians have become pretty anxious about what is going on and what is the intention of their politicians: what exactly do we want to do with the environment.

The response of this government after years of debate and an idea that has been carried out in many other jurisdictions for many different purposes is to have an environmental assessment process; that is, to set up apart from politics a way of considering the environment, a way of protecting the environment, to give Canadians some sense of confidence that the environment is going to be protected by some people who are impartial, non-partisan, away from the fights of the floor of the House of Commons and into a more and more considered process.

Unfortunately that very process is being tarnished by the weakness of the legislation that we are being presented with. The government should consider the criticism of the opposition and think twice about handing us a process which is flawed in its spirit and flawed in its detail in terms of responding to the problems that have been discussed elsewhere.

We have talked perhaps too much in this House about specific projects in our own provinces, but if we look at some of the series of projects in the west—the Oldman

dam project, the Rafferty-Alameda project, the projects in northern Manitoba, as I alluded to before, the protection of water, the water system at Shoal Lake for the city of Winnipeg—we will see that all of these projects have created either litigation or tremendous conflict.

One of the sad parts of the process is not only that we have the big headlines in the major newspapers and the top stories on the national news, but we also have a lot of local interests that are hurt by this insecurity because they do not understand the intention of the politicians. I know for example the ministers from the west who represent farming communities are very sensitive to this issue. These farming communities are dry. They need water, but at the same time we do not need to pay the price of environmental damage in order to give them water.

There is a conflict, a basic economic, social, value system conflict at stake here. We just cannot impose regulations. We just cannot impose laws. We have to make sure that people have confidence that the system being set up is going to protect their interests. If it is going to be non-political, if it is going to be arm's length from the government, if it is going to be a new agency located in Ottawa, this agency should be sensitive to the interests of local communities whether they be an Indian band, a small farming community or a more isolated part of the country which we do not even perceive at first to be a community. We also have to make sure that these people understand that the interest of the legislation is to protect them, as well as to protect the environment, and that they work toward consensus.

That is why, for example, it is so important that we state publicly and in writing as part of the legislation that the people who are going to be intervening are supported by the federal government. The cost of intervention for people from a small town is tremendously expensive, particularly when they do not have a lot of experience in these interventions and they have to buy high-priced experienced help who have appeared in front of these panels and appeared in front of other semi-autonomous bodies. If they do not have that resource, how can they participate? If they cannot participate, they are going to get hurt. If they get hurt, they are going to resent the federal government.

Government Orders