

Environmental Affairs

South (Mr. Blenkarn). As usual, he tells the whole truth. This is something we have not seen for years from Members of the Opposition. He is tying in the need to reduce the deficit to our fiscal responsibilities.

What he has not mentioned and what I wish to ask him about is that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business led by Mr. Bulloch and the Business Council on National Issues led by Mr. D'Aquino have both been saying consistently and constantly for over a year now that the federal Government is not going far enough to reduce the deficit of Canada. How does the Hon. Member for Mississauga South react to those comments from those very distinguished businessmen who represent the interests of hundreds of thousands of companies and workers across Canada?

Mr. Blenkarn: Mr. Speaker, of course, this Bill does not deal with the federal responsibility to reduce the deficit faster or to increase taxes imposed. There is no question about it, though, that there is a heavy demand from many people in Canada for us to get after the deficit. Let it not be said that this Bill is an effort to pass the deficit on to the backs of the provinces because it is not.

What I had hoped to point out this afternoon was the effect of the federal tax changes which automatically enrich provincial revenues. That automatic enrichment of provincial revenues should mean that the provinces can well afford, because of the change in the fiscal arrangement of revenue collection, to handle these reductions in the increases of federal transfers. If we do not do what is proposed in this Bill, the fiscal position of the federal Government will be even worse. We would be collecting the taxes and passing them on to the provinces even though the effect of tax increases would be to increase provincial revenues in any event.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): Order, please! It being six o'clock p.m., pursuant to an order made Wednesday, June 18, 1986 the House will now proceed to consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

● (1800)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS--MOTIONS

[English]

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

RESEARCH INTO TOXIC CHEMICALS

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the Government should consider the advisability of protecting the health of Canadians, present and future generations:

(1) by renewal of funds for research into toxic chemicals.

(2) by telling Canadians of progress made in the removal of toxic wastes from the American side of the Niagara River.

(3) by providing for the upgrading of waste water treatment facilities and generally raising the profile of toxic chemicals in all areas of health research and preventive policy making.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am putting forward this motion because we in the Liberal Party have regretfully come to the conclusion that the Government is abandoning, and in some way has abandoned, its responsibility to protect the health of Canadians in relation to toxic chemicals. The Government has been in a retreat since November, 1984. It has been inconclusive and inept in matters related to toxic chemicals in particular. It has shrouded itself in secrecy in not letting Canadians know what is the content of certain understandings. It has been repressive, and in particular I am referring to the Minister of the Environment (Mr. McMillan) and his relations with the scientists in his own Department and the scientific documents they may produce or make public.

I should like to back up these statements with some specific facts. Before doing so, and in the limited time available, I say to the House that if the Government is in retreat, it is because it has decided to trade the health of Canadians for the sake of reducing the deficit. It has reduced the investments which were planned to expand toxicology research across Canada.

The Government has been inconclusive and inept. On the eve of negotiations with environmental authorities in Washington, it gave away Canada's position by revealing that there was a disagreement between Ottawa and Queen's Park, Ontario. It has shrouded itself in secrecy in that it decided not to publish a document about an understanding or proposal which was brought to Ottawa last October by the Washington counterpart to our Minister of the Environment. It has been repressive in relation to the freedom of expression of opinion by scientists in Environment Canada.

Here are the facts in chronological sequence. In November, 1984, the Government shelved the Guelph Toxicology Centre, the \$8.5 million which was meant to set up a centre for excellence in the study of toxicological matters. This would have provided an opportunity for scientists already trained for that purpose. Also it would have provided an opportunity for young scientists who are still to be trained and are looking forward to an opportunity to develop a career in that specific and very important field.

In November, 1984, the Government also eliminated the environmental secretariat and related research which was carried out by the National Research Council. It cut Canadian Wildlife Services by some \$3.8 million and the capacity for assessment of and response to environmental threats in Environment Canada by \$12.2 million and 25 person-years.

In March, 1985, the Government did not renew the annual \$2.5 million for research on toxic chemicals in the Niagara River. In May of that year, the then Minister of the Environment met with Lee Thomas, the head of the United States Environmental Protection Agency in Washington. She returned to Canada, promising an American plan for full and speedy action on the Niagara River to clean up toxic dumps.