

Government Organization Act, 1970

Mr. Drury: Mr. Chairman, I must confess that I am becoming a little impatient. The hon. gentleman has been reading the mind of the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry and he has also been reading my mind and, as usual, arriving at the wrong conclusion, with a lot of rather unpleasant innuendos all the way through.

The fact of the matter is that the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry, I am informed—I have not spoken to him, nor do I pretend to read his mind—learned of the intention to proceed with this bill today. He was in Vancouver. When he received this communication by telephone, he undertook to try to make travel arrangements to come back here. By this morning he was not here. The fact is that the hon. gentleman has a timetable similar to mine, and because he could not get from Vancouver back here in time the hon. member assumes that the intention was to proceed with the timetable as it is written. I suggest that both his logic and his imputed motives are false. I suggest that perhaps we should let this clause stand.

Mr. Howard (Skeena): At 10.45 last night Vancouver time, which is 2.45 a.m. Ottawa time, and at 10.50 p.m. there were two Air Canada aircraft leaving Vancouver which would have got the minister to Ottawa this morning, first-class or economy, in time to prepare for this debate and in time to cancel his program for the Liberal party in Biggar, Saskatchewan. That also is the truth of the matter and it has nothing to do with innuendo, slander or anything else. I just make the direct statement that so far as the minister, the President of the Treasury Board and the government are concerned, the Liberal party in Biggar is more important than the well-being of the people of this nation with regard to environmental matters.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Harding: Mr. Chairman, I rise on a point which the President of the Treasury Board made in connection with the amendment before the House. He pointed out, in reply to two preceding speakers, that the addition of the word "national" would restrict or limit the objectives. I want to say very clearly that what I am trying to do precisely is limit the multiplicity of standards which we have in Canada. That is the reason for setting national standards. I want to bring home this fact to the President of the Treasury Board. That is exactly what I am trying to do in the amendment.

We are trying to establish a set of standards in Canada so that we will not have provinces or water quality management areas following a host of different standards which will eventually create pollution havens. We are completely fed up with the present circumstances under which provinces and water quality management areas have been given the power to set different standards in different parts of Canada. As long as we have this type of legislation on the statute books we will continue to have trouble with the root cause of the problem. If we are to stop pollution in this country we will have to set broad, national standards and let industry, the public and governments alike know that these are the standards and

[Mr. Howard (Skeena).]

that we will not allow them to be broken. This is the reason for the amendment we are proposing.

The minister tells us that it is a good idea to have a number of broad objectives. For goodness sake, we have been running wild for years and that is the reason we are in trouble now. That is the reason it will cost us billions of dollars to clean up the mess. Let us make certain that we have criteria and national standards which will do the job of controlling pollution nationally and provincially. These people are asking for guidance from the federal government and they are not getting it. They are getting nothing but a great big run-around in this bill and in other bills, in the setting of standards and in everything else. It is time the environmentalists and the Canadian public realized this. I suggest that the minister's answer is anything but satisfactory.

Mr. Comeau: Mr. Chairman, I am wondering whether or not this clause is to stand.

The Chairman: There was no agreement to stand the clause.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Chairman, I rise on a point of order. I thought the President of the Treasury Board indicated that he was prepared to stand this part of the bill and to go on to part III. That was my understanding.

Mr. Drury: Mr. Chairman, I think the hon. member for Skeena said he was not prepared to have it stood.

Mr. Comeau: I will be very brief on the subject, but I would very much like to have the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry here. This is why I would like to have the clause stood. This type of amendment was proposed when we discussed the Canada Water Act last year. The NDP and our party proposed the type of amendments that are being proposed now, providing for national standards, but they were defeated. At page 2830 of *Hansard* of January 27, 1971, just two weeks ago, the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry made the following statement. Perhaps the parliamentary secretary can answer my question. The minister stated:

I am opposed to different standards in different places. I am opposed to pollution havens. I am opposed to big industry picking on our weaker provinces and our weaker municipalities.

• (3:10 p.m.)

He went on to explain what he meant. Then he asked this question of the House:

So, why run the risk of losing everything when uniform national standards can provide us with all the protection we need?

The hon. member from Renfrew is being hypocritical about this. He is going to vote against the amendment despite what the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry has said. This is exactly what the minister wants to do under this legislation. I repeat his words:

So, why run the risk of losing everything when uniform national standards can provide us with all the protection we need?

How can you explain the fact that the government does not want to accept this amendment?