

*Government Orders*

spend where it will most benefit our trade is nothing short of immoral.

We know that just small amounts of money, well spent on basic health care, on the education of women, will do more to save our environment than building megaprojects, whether it is dams or huge energy facilities. Yet we seem to have trouble learning that very basic lesson, that a small amount of money spent on human development is the most important thing we can do for our world. So we see a shift of money away from those in the world who most need it to where it is going to help us trade better and make more profits.

At home we have not even addressed how we are going to cut our own energy use. We keep taking money out of energy conservation and alternative energy sources and putting it into megaprojects for energy production, encouraging us to be more consumptive and more wasteful. This is exactly the opposite direction to what would be indicated by the kind of work, the kind of onerous responsibility we are asking the national round table to take on and which it has been taking on.

• (1605)

We have not addressed the issues of how our trade affects poverty around the world and the pressures on the environment resulting from that poverty. It is shameful that in 1993 the richest countries of this world take from the poorest \$50 billion a year more than we put into them and now we who consider ourselves one of the most progressive nations of the world have just said we are going to put even less into those poorest countries. We are profiting from their poverty and our earth, our air, and our water are the victims of that profit.

We have seen government refusing to take its responsibility and play a leadership role by even looking at its own operations and ensuring we are conducting the business of government in the most environmentally sound way possible. We have ignored our own legislation on environmental assessment to the destruction of the environment and of our own aboriginal people.

We are continuing a world where 20 per cent of the population consumes 80 per cent of its wealth and resources. If we are serious about the job we are now formally and legally giving the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, we have to look first to ourselves in this Chamber, to those who are in the

cabinet room, to heed the lessons and the wisdom that have already come from the round table and to act in ways that are supportive of their mandate, not destructive.

The round table has played a crucial role in bringing many different forces together in creating a focus and a force for change that must keep growing if we are to leave the next generation a world that is even habitable, much less prosperous.

We look forward to supporting this bill, seeing it go to committee and discussing the legislation in particular in committee.

**Hon. Pauline Browes (Minister of State (Employment and Immigration):** Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to rise today in support of an action that is in the interest of all Canadians, and that is Bill C-72, an act to establish the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy.

Canada has a very distinguished history in environmental leadership dating back to early in this century. We are a protector of great natural resources. It has been of interest to Canadians and the establishment of the Commission of Conservation in 1909 was in retrospect a far-sighted action for any government then existing.

In 1972 Canadians supported and played a leadership role in the ground-breaking Stockholm Conference on Human Environment. Then in the 1980s, Canadians led the way in building international consensus and preparing the original world conservation strategy and its recent successor Caring for the Earth.

A few years ago in this Chamber, I think it was in 1987, we had an opportunity to debate at some length the World Commission on Environment and Development. This was a United Nations report, commonly called the Brundtland commission or *Our Common Future*. The commission was put forward by the United Nations, chaired by the then Prime Minister of Norway, Madam Gro Brundtland. We had two Canadian representatives. A very distinguished Canadian, Jim McNeill, was the secretary of the Brundtland commission. In the report it had a recommendation that there would be round tables where people from different parts of the community could come together and discuss issues that were important to the environment.