

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, I want to add a few words at this time on the motion put forward by the hon. member for Davenport. In doing so I wish to add some comments to the debate that has sprung up here with the last two speakers concerning jurisdiction.

I do commend to all members of the House the report which was distributed last week by the Standing Committee on the Environment in which the jurisdictional issues have been dealt with. The member for Skeena is a member of that committee and participated very diligently and with dedication to the issue of the Constitution and jurisdiction for the environment.

As the member for Port Moody—Coquitlam indicated, the environment is an international matter. It is not one that breaks down into small parts easily. One of the topics at the Brazil conference, the UNCED conference, in June of this year is treating it as an international matter that requires the attention of all governments in all parts of the country. There is no doubt that we in Canada have a long way to go to deal with the pollution that exists and the potential for environmental damage that exists in other parts of the world.

• (1620)

That brings me to the subject of sustainable development. Like the member from Skeena earlier, it is really crucial that all members of the House know the definition and interpretation of sustainable development that we are using in the context of this bill and other matters. We have to be very careful that development is not recognized as an ongoing, forever type of a concept when we understand and know that the environment is made up of many finite pieces. Nothing could be more finite than the cod stocks off the Atlantic coast at the moment. We know there cannot be continued development when the resource has been or is in the process of being depleted.

The Minister of Forestry is in the House listening intently to this debate. The Minister of Forestry knows that the forest is a finite concept in Canada. There is only so much timber that can be grown at any one time in the world and at the moment more timber is being cut than is being replanted. Therefore, we do not have an infinite resource that we can continue to develop for our purposes.

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It is the same with the atmosphere. The ozone problem is a very good one to examine because of the new hole that has opened over North America and Greenland. As the ozone hole opens, we realize that it is a finite resource that has been protecting us and if we are not careful, i.e., allow the development of CFC based refrigeration capacity in China, India and other parts of the world to meet the needs of growing and developing populations, that development will not be sustainable. As those refrigerators deteriorate the CFCs evacuate and the ozone holes become bigger.

As I said in another comment made at another time in this House, it is alarming to hear the Minister of the Environment talking about telling children they cannot go out into the sun at certain times of the day because the hole in the ozone has made working, living and playing in the sun a dangerous activity.

It is alarming in another sense as well. Children are not the only living things that are out in the sun. Plants and animals are part of our natural environment, our biosphere. Plants and animals cannot be told to put on hats and stay out of the sun between the hours of 11 in the morning and 2.30 in the afternoon. Plants and animals cannot read the ozone warnings that will be published in the newspaper, yet they will be affected by the ultraviolet light coming down through the hole in the ozone layer.

These are finite matters and sustainable development means that when we do anything that affects that environment, we are ensuring that we know we can continue to do that forever and ever and ever. It is our intention, since we know that we borrow this world from our children, to leave this world for them in better condition that we inherited from our ancestors.

When we think about that concept through the generations our environment can only improve with each new generation, as each new generation tries to ensure that they leave this planet a better place environmentally for those who will come after them.

Therefore, sustainable development is a very particular term to the environment. When business misconstrues it to mean that: "By golly, we can do just about anything we want as long as it does not adversely affect the environment", well adversely affecting the environment is something that this bill tries to deal with.