

human being must have a safe, healthy and non-polluted environment.

What else are we referring to when we talk about an environmental bill of rights? One of the central points made by environmental groups is that the public must have an opportunity to be involved in this process and play a role in the enforcement of environmental law. Why are those groups asking for ordinary citizens to have the right to play a role in enforcing environmental standards? Surely when we pass legislation in the House establishing environmental standards, that means there will be an end to pollution. We will stop laying waste to our environment. It should not be necessary for an ordinary citizen in my riding to become involved in the process in order to ensure that these standards are met.

The problem is that environmental legislation is often window dressing. While Governments have good standards on the books, they allow a great deal of discretion for their Ministers of the Environment and Cabinet. We may have good statements of commitments from Ministers, and we may have good standards written into legislation, there tend to be loopholes in these situations and Governments have failed to carry out these standards with the vigour required. When it comes to the environment, Governments tend to follow behind public opinion. Citizens feel that they cannot trust their Governments. Government continues to allow the environment to be polluted and succumbs to economic blackmail. Therefore, citizens feel that it cannot be left to the politicians, they have to become involved. They must have a legal right to be involved in the process because Governments fail to follow through. That is what we mean when we talk about an environmental bill of rights.

Another key point in regard to an environmental bill of rights is the fact that citizens should have some right to participate in environmental decision-making. The Minister has the right to set standards and to outline what levels industries have to meet, but the public must have an opportunity to be involved with regard to the establishment of standards. That cannot be left to the Ministers alone.

Some serious criticisms have been brought forward in this legislation. I am not only making these criticisms to make the Government look bad. I must say that sometimes the impression is that the Government invites that to be done. I am not doing this only to be negative because I am on the opposition side and my friends are on the government side. I am doing this because it is important for us to realize that public opinion is ahead of public policy. When it comes to the environment, up until the present time Canadian citizens have had much higher standards than public policy indicates.

The legislation before us today takes some steps forward, but those steps are feeble compared to what the public is demanding and what the public will support. Canadians are asking Governments to set a new bottom line when it comes to the environment, and to say, "No more polluting the environment, no more laying waste to the environment, no more acid

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rain, no more building of nuclear plants and building up wastes that we do not know how to handle which will be a problem for unforeseen generations. No more creating problems that are a danger to human health and survival".

The public is out in front and needs decisive and strong action from Governments. We need the Government to represent the people and to say that we will no longer allow the environment to be laid waste by industry as a result of economic blackmail. Governments should be creative in the manner in which they handle economic development and preserve the environment.

[Translation]

Mr. Fontaine: Mr. Speaker, I would have a few comments on the allegations made by the socialist Member who said no Conservative Members rose today on this matter. I would remind him that six Government Members have already spoken, that this Government has had a day and half of debate on this legislation, that the Minister of the Environment (Mr. McMillan) is impatiently awaiting the House's acceptance of the Bill on second reading, so that it can be referred to a committee where it will be very well scrutinized.

I would also like to tell him that, as far as relations with industry and environment protection are concerned, he is not so well abreast of the situation because he should read the report presented yesterday, September 24, to the National Council of Resources and Environment Ministers. That report of the Council chaired by no other than Mr. Gérald Lécuyer, a socialist from Manitoba, has this to say in its introduction: "This report includes ideas and recommendations to harmonize Canada's sustained economic development with its environment". So we do not have that many lessons to receive from the socialist Member concerning any harmonization between environment protection and the industrial community.

Finally, he blames us for acting alone in the discussion of this Bill.

First, I would like to point out that it is very difficult to co-operate with the socialists. However, we have not acted unilaterally. There have been many public meetings about this Bill. The Bill itself has been published and fully explained. Ministers have made speeches throughout Canada. There have been meetings at the provincial level.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, it is important to remind the House that the Hon. Member is able to speak about the environment today simply because his leader was unsuccessful in obtaining a debate on free trade. He objected to having such a debate for two and a half years, but he asked for one today. Now, he wants to fill the gap because the Chair refused the NDP request for this debate, with good reason, as it would have been quite inconsistent with everything the socialists have said for the past two and a half years. If the Hon. Member wants to go on wasting taxpayers' money and the time of this House, he can do so, but we of the Conservative party have done our duty