

*Government Orders*

questions of fundamental development and environmental accountability.

I do not think that anyone takes pleasure out of the federal government be a policeman in terms of the actions of the provincial governments. We can see down the road a whole series of potential conflicts, but one way to ensure that there is a more reasonable accommodation is to get the right federal legislation in place. That has not happened. Loopholes and escape hatches are provided and the clauses by which discretion can be exercised do not give a clear message to provincial governments that at the federal level continued abuse or degradation will not be tolerated. However, there is always a way of slipping through, of getting around, and of short-circuiting the system.

I would prefer somewhere down the road for some future government to work out a new arrangement where we share responsibility between federal and provincial governments on these projects. I think that our own creative juices should be employed for finding out how we can share jurisdiction for environmental assessment.

I think it is particularly crucial in the case of fresh water. One of the great mythologies of Canada at this time is that we are a country that abounds in fresh water. That is not true. We have lots of water. Much of it is in places that are not accessible and, where it is being used, it is running out.

We saw a case in this House only a short week ago when we argued over the Rafferty-Alameda dam. What was at stake was a large part of the Palliser Triangle in western Canada which is dry and needs water. Having been born in Saskatchewan and knowing the people well, I sympathize with the feeling that that part of the world cannot survive many more of the droughts that we have had over the last few years.

The quick fix solution that Mr. Devine offered—build a dam and it will all be solved—is not the way to approach the problem. I know that the Senate is not exactly a word that comes lightly to the lips of members of Parliament on the opposite side these days, but I recommend a Senate study that was done a few years ago by Herb Sparrow, the senator from Saskatchewan, on water conservation on the prairies. It pointed out that we did not need a big, grandiose megaproject to solve the

water problems. The real answer is a series of small steps to conserve the soil, to bring about a different raising of the water level in the prairie region, something that should have been undertaken jointly by federal-provincial governments.

No one had the political will to do that, so it ends up in a confrontation. We have angry words between federal-provincial governments. We have fights in the House of Commons. We have demands of the federal government to step in and stop the project.

I was pointed at and I have no apologies for that, because it had gone too far. However, we had wasted two, three, five or ten years initiating what Amory Lovins once called the soft half toward project development: small irrigation projects, water reservoirs, ways of controlling the salinity of the soil. A whole series of such measures would require some investment, some involvement and some joint planning. They would not require legalistic confrontation.

In my view an environmental assessment should be in effect the last resort. When stupidity prevails environmental assessment is brought in to put a stop to it. We could avoid a lot of that if we began to have a pro-active environmental program and began to say: "Let's not do the big capital projects any more." Maybe we have to say that like the dinosaur the age of the huge megaproject must come to an end, and that whether it is in energy, water, or resource development there is a better alternate way which does not do the kind of damage to the environment we have seen in this country but preserves and conserves water, develops resources and creates wealth. The two must go hand in hand.

It is important that we are debating Bill C-78 in isolation. We should see it in the context of a larger package of the green paper and other areas or, more important, in a willingness on the part of government leaders at the three levels of government to come together and start doing some joint development and planning in order to deal with environmental problems. We are caught in the compartmentalization of this country: here is a provincial right, here is a federal right, and where they clash we will have a fight and take it to court. It is about time we realized that water and air pollution does not recognize provincial or federal boundaries. It is shared by all jurisdictions.