

Government Orders

I have some questions about why now do they express this concern.

Mr. George S. Baker (Gander—Grand Falls): Mr. Speaker, just a few words concerning this piece of legislation before the House before it passes into final reading.

I note that there is a restriction in the legislation in that it is restricted to projects, projects being defined as a physical act, as some sort of physical activity. Of course this means that a great many things are excluded under this piece of legislation.

In fact, when it comes to an assessment being made of the environmental impact of decisions by the Government of Canada, the major decisions of the Government of Canada that impact adversely upon our environment will not be covered under this legislation. In fact, it will be so limited as to involve only projects that are built in a certain place and that are built under a certain authority. Very restrictive defines what federal lands are, what federal authority is. I note that it even goes so far as to define the authority under the act for a project that extends out to the edge of the continental shelf. It says either to the economic zone of 200 miles or beyond out to the edge of the continental shelf, whichever is the greater of the distances.

My observation that I make while this bill is passing third reading is that it is very limited in its scope. It does say, I know, an act to establish a federal environmental assessment process. In the actual title and in the preamble to the bill it talks about environmental assessment, about an effective means of integrating environmental factors into planning and decision-making processes. It talks about achieving sustainable development by conserving and enhancing environmental quality, and by encouraging and promoting economic development.

• (1710)

The reason I say that this bill is too limited is this. The very department that is sponsoring this bill is the federal Department of the Environment. The federal Department of the Environment passes judgment all the time on things that are of great danger to our environment, that destroy our environment; destroys our environment in our forests and in our lakes and streams and in the ocean. The Department of the Environment, the very department that is bringing in this bill, allows no public process in its determination of whether or not a chemical

can be used to eradicate an insect in the forest. It makes no reference to that. It has no jurisdiction.

In other words, whereas it enables the government to set into motion an assessment process that involves public input, that allows interested parties to comment on and to make decisions upon whether or not a project, so to speak, shall go ahead for environmental purposes, it makes no such claims for great decisions, very large decisions that are made by this very government department in its every day activities influencing our environment.

I want to give one example, which is a prime example this time of the year.

The Department of the Environment sits down with two other federal government agencies, the Department of Agriculture and the Department of National Health and Welfare. They sit down from time to time and determine whether or not to legalize herbicides or pesticides in Canada. They sit down and determine in that committee, in that review process, whether or not to license or to recommend to the Pest Control Division of Agriculture Canada, that would make a judgment based upon an act of Parliament, whether or not to legalize a substance for use in our environment.

Let me give an example. If you were today to ask the Department of the Environment what substance it approves for use on all of our forest lands in Canada, it will say to you one word: fenitrothion, a chemical which has proven to kill birds, to not allow them to reproduce, killing the very things that eat the very insects that they are trying to get rid of.

Imagine, aeroplanes up in the air dumping down in big crates, in big enormous barrels, chemicals to spill all over our magnificent forest lands in British Columbia, Ontario, Newfoundland, New Brunswick, all over the place and the Government of Canada comes up with this bill. Here we are talking today about an environmental assessment process. An assessment process? About wharves, about breakwaters, dams?

We know that this government department says that you can dump thousands upon thousands of gallons of chemicals all over your forest land, all over your rivers, all over Canada. Just imagine. There is only one other thing they allow for use in our forest lands to get rid of these pests. You go around with a little squirter and you squirt and you get rid of insects in trees. But the way we do it in Canada is we dump it out of aeroplanes over