

Canadian Environmental Protection Act

and only after it has been placed on that list are the regulations written. In order to get on that list, there are all kinds of hurdles. Manufacturers of chemicals will be putting all kinds of obstacles in the way of the Government in trying to determine that certain chemicals are toxic and wanting to have them listed. Once a chemical is listed and the writing of regulations starts, the Bill allows the raising of more objections and the convening of a second review board to review the proposed regulations.

How can such a cumbersome process operating on a substance by substance basis deal with the 60,000 chemicals that we are operating with in modern industry? We are dealing here with the problem that Environment Canada is a weak member of the federal bureaucracy. Instead of being a lead agency and instead of being central to all the Government's planning, it is way off on the edge. Instead of requiring that everything the Government does and everything that industry does be environmentally acceptable—we have that kind of an approach when it comes to dealing with money matters which have to go through Treasury Board—the Department of the Environment tends to be a weak member of the federal bureaucracy. It is like the Baltimore Orioles in baseball. I see they won one game last week, but they are still on a major losing streak. Unfortunately that is the way the Department of the Environment is.

When will we have a Government that takes seriously the threats to the environment and that the environment is the space in which we have to live and breathe? When will we have a Government that takes seriously that any threat to the environment is a threat to individual human health, as I showed it was to the workers at the Harmac pulp mill and to other pulp mills? It is a threat to our quality of life when we destroy the environment. One of the things we have going for us in Canada, which they do not have in some large cities of the more built up parts of the world, is a decent environment that we can protect. It adds a great deal to our quality of life. We need legislation that will protect it much more than this legislation does. When will we have a Government which recognizes that destruction of the environment leads to a destruction of our long-term economic welfare? We can take shortcuts with the environment and think that we are saving money, but in the long term it is destructive economically. We need a Government to recognize that. Finally, we need a Government which recognizes that ultimately the total fate of our earth depends upon the protection of our environment. We need a Government that will act.

We will support this Bill when it comes to a vote. It is a step forward but it is a very small step. It does not take the comprehensive view of the environment and the need for regulation that we would have wished our Government to have taken and which the rhetoric of the Government would lead us to expect.

Ms. McLaughlin: Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's very comprehensive review of this Bill. As he says, in principle,

it is an improvement. However, it is a misnomer because it is basically a recycling Bill taking into account the old Ocean Dumping Act, the Clean Air Act and the Environmental Contaminants Act. It is not the kind of comprehensive environmental Bill that I think many Canadians have been calling for over a long time.

I would like to focus on one point to which my colleague referred and I will ask for his comments on it. He referred to an article by Mr. Hall in *Probe Post* and the issue of the single chemical approach to environmental pollution. This is a very serious question for consideration. Let us think back to DDT. We recognized the concern for that. We enacted laws to control it but found that it was not controlled internationally—of course, we cannot do anything about that—but there were other equally serious and important pollutants. We have seen other examples of this single chemical approach. There are something like 60,000 chemicals that could be considered industrial chemicals. To try to identify, as my colleague pointed out, and to regulate those chemicals is an almost incomprehensible prodigious task. Mr. Hall in his article gives a good analogy of how feasible the single chemical approach is. He gives the analogy of the Health and Welfare Department where he notes that it is responsible for testing additives and drugs and the quality of those additives and drugs. They number somewhere in the hundreds. It is very difficult for that Department to do that. We are talking, and I reiterate, about tens of thousands. We have neither the resources to test those chemicals in a really credible way that people will feel is a forceful method of addressing the environmental pollution.

● (1610)

Mr. Hall suggests that this approach is simply untenable and unrealistic. The approach should be to simply keep chemicals out of the environment, because testing takes considerable time and the toxicity is often a long-term situation which may not appear in the first test. I would like to ask my colleague what he thinks about this single chemical approach. Certainly it is better than nothing, but is it really the answer?

Mr. Manly: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for the question. Obviously the single substance approach is not going to work. It has not worked over the 10 years since it was introduced. Mr. Hall points out that it is like being surrounded by 60,000 bees and trying to decide which one is going to sting you and where.

Mr. Hall points out that the 19-member team of Contaminants Control Branch took 10 years to assess five chemicals. That adds up to 190 bureaucrat years to write five regulations, or 38 years per chemical. If Environment Canada took all of its 10,000 employees, everyone from the janitors up to the Deputy Minister, and put them to work writing regulations, at 38 bureaucratic years per substance they would be able to write regulations for 260 substances a year when the industry is introducing 1,000 new substances every year.