

Private Members' Business

to the word and do not follow through, we will not necessarily foster this kind of co-operation.

Mr. Speaker, sustainable development cannot be achieved unless government leads the way, all the way down the administrative ladder. Sustainable development must be an integral part of our daily lives and sustainability must guide all our decisions. For that, we must involve people at the grass roots and bring these virtues and values into principles. The government is determined to fully consider the environment in evaluating projects and policies. This is the idea behind the reform of the federal environmental assessment review process.

You see two things that this government has done: the green plan and the proposed legislation on the table, Bill C-13. They call for action and show this government's convictions and virtues.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind you that our government has given much greater importance to the role of environment minister, so that environmental issues take the high priority they deserve in federal decision making. Furthermore, our government has set up a Cabinet Committee on the Environment, whose mission is to carry out our ambitious environmental program and to ensure that the government's policies and programs fully comply with our environmental objectives. The Minister of the Environment is also on the very important Priorities and Planning Committee of cabinet.

• (1750)

All this is to tell you again, Mr. Speaker, that the actions, regulations and responsibilities assigned to the various decision-making levels in the federal government attest to these convictions. The ministers and legislation like C-13 are a good illustration of it.

In conclusion, I want to say that this is the position taken by the government, to make the environment minister an influential member of Cabinet and to give him the instruments he needs to carry out his mission and allow Canadians to judge whether or not the government is doing a good job of meeting its objectives.

That is what I wanted to say to you, Mr. Speaker. I see that my time is up.

[English]

Mr. Garth Turner (Halton—Peel): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to say a few words about the motion of the hon. member. I know he is a sincere member of this House and I think his motion is put forward in all sincerity. It is useful to review it:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should consider amending the Constitution Act to recognize the right of every person in Canada to a safe and healthy environment.

On the surface I do not think there are too many Canadians who would say the hon. member was off base in putting forward a resolution like this one. It has a lot of merit to it. I think it has a lot of depth to it and I think it should be reviewed seriously.

I guess if I might make a criticism of my colleague I would say the temptation is large right now for Canadians to make the Constitution into some kind of a shopping list for all the good things we might want to have in our society.

We saw this in the last few weeks in the constitutional conferences. This last weekend in Toronto we heard aboriginal leaders say that they would like the Constitution to say that they are a distinct society. We have certainly heard Bob Rae, the premier of Ontario, arguing that the Constitution should contain a social charter. We have heard the National Action Committee on the Status of Women and Judy Rebick say that the Senate should be restructured so that it is gender specific, that there are certain seats set aside for women, for example.

I have been advocating that the Canadian Constitution should contain property rights: the right of an individual to own property. I have argued that the Constitution should give more rights to Canadian citizens. If I had my way I would like to see a constitutional amendment requiring a balanced budget in this country. I would like to see the government's proposals for a stronger economic union as part of it.

Basically a lot of us are looking at constitutional change now in a way that is quite divorced from the fundamentals that got us into this. We have a country that is in jeopardy of falling apart because of a fundamental misunderstanding between Quebec and the rest of Canada. Maybe it is time we resisted some of these temptations.

I wanted to say that because although I think the constitutional amendment proposed by the member is a good, sound and sincere one we are may be falling victim