

Government Orders

because that suggested there is not very much discretion and that there is an obligation incumbent on that office, a shall or must component—to do a full environmental assessment of any project that touches on the minister's area of responsibility. This act holds out the possibility that that might happen.

And so we collapse into a direction that suggested that we must act in a particular fashion to one where he may and we cloud that may in words that convey the impression that the minister now has greater power. But the power always seems to be discretionary and so we again collapse into the strength of the minister himself. We collapse into the strength of the political will of the government at the moment. We again collapse into whether there is an acceptance of the public input in the mechanism that appears to be put in place.

The guidelines for the environmental assessment are clearly much, much too vague and leave too much to the discretion of the Minister of the Environment and to those individual ministers who are ultimately responsible for making the final decisions regarding those environmental decisions that impact on their departments.

I have seen in the question and answer session of the last debate that the member for Skeena suggested that the committee on the environment has very fundamental suggestions to make about how to redraft. The key word was "redraft" and not make amendments that are going to provide acceptable frills to this bill but to alter completely the whole dimension of this bill. One only does that in the context of committee if in fact one sees great big gaping holes, whether one calls into question in fact the entire direction of the bill or the ability of the minister to deliver on what the bill purports to deliver.

I know that my colleagues will also be interested in pointing to certain projects, as my colleague for Témiscamingue did and others have done in past. The House has debated over the course of the last week on the Rafferty Dam. But this does not specify, for example, which projects or classes of projects, which acts of Parliament or regulations, or which federal authorities will be subject to the bill. In fact, Orders in Council through cabinet will make some of these determinations after the bill is passed. There is no predetermination prior to the passage of the bill. We are going to be faced, as I think one member has indicated already, with a desire to deal

with about 100 or more federal statutes that should be coming under Bill C-78. We are dealing with only about eight of them.

• (1720)

We are making a big deal of it. We are making a small step and it is a big deal, because it suggests that there is a frame of mind that is going in the direction where we are finally accepting responsibilities for sustainable development. We are finally accepting responsibilities for environmental degradation, and we are going to do something about it.

If, Mr. Speaker, from this side of the House, you hear criticism, it is not because we are negative, but because we want to take a reasonable initiative and make it better. What would we do to make it better? One of the things that we would like to do is make sure that we can pinpoint those departments or ministries that have to come into play.

For example, the minister and members of the government side have pointed out that we cannot apply our principles to everything. For example, we cannot apply them as well to things such as the Export Development Corporation or CIDA. We would have some obligations that extend from our understanding of the environment for us in Canada as Canadians, but understanding, as well, that environment is a global issue. We have incumbent responsibilities to ensure that the kind of principles that guide us here also guide us with our dealings with any of our partners, whether they be on a business side or through CIDA which is also business.

Just as a trite reference, for 1990-91, there is a projected budget of \$399 million through the EDC and \$2.1 billion under CIDA. Both of them are going to be exempt from this bill because we are waiting—and I am paraphrasing the minister and the government—until the international community comes to an agreement on whether this is acceptable or not.

If we accept the principle, certainly we ought to be able to do it on our own. We need not wait until the international community approves of something. There are certainly ways that we can influence how we as Canadians are going to have an impact on the environment. We do not have to go very far for that advice. We can go to the committee. I am going to make reference to the committee on the environment, because it has