

Government Orders

job of the legislative committee easier down the road so that only the fine tuning, the final amendments, need to be done.

I would like to come back to the member who gave such an excellent speech on this and ask him whether or not he thinks that there is some kind of stunt going on here from the government side, where it will be travelling around the country saying: "Well, we had a special committee. It sat from June until October", not bothering to say it only had a chairman for two days. It did not have a clerk until after the end of September. It did not hear the first witnesses until October, never heard from the minister. Would he not agree?

• (1640)

I wonder if the hon. member would have something to say about the kind of smoke and mirrors. Now the government apparently plans to bring in closure. It not even putting up any speakers. It says say it is the most important bill before the House and it does not put up any speakers. Interesting. I would like to hear from the hon. member about all this stuff.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I realize that I probably do not have a lot of time to answer the eloquent question posed by the hon. member for Skeena, but as a member of this House who has been sitting in on the preliminary meetings of the C-78 committee, I can tell you that we have been working and trying to obtain the presence of the Minister of the Environment before the committee. Last week was supposed to be the week in which the Minister of the Environment would appear before the committee. I do not know what has happened to the commitment from the Minister of the Environment to appear before the C-78 committee.

If the government is not putting a lot of attention on the C-78 committee, I see no reason why the minister would be bothered with spending much of his time appearing before the committee. I think that that is another bit of evidence which indicates that the government does not consider C-78's prestudy committee to be worth what it had intended it to be in the first place, that in fact we do have a smoke and mirrors game being played here. What we should be doing is reverting this matter to the prestudy committee and not discussing it at second reading here in this Chamber until we have a different bill recommended by the prestudy committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I have considered the motion presented by the hon. member for The Battlefords—Meadow Lake and I find it procedurally acceptable.

Resuming debate, I recognize the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre.

Mr. David Walker (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I would like to use this opportunity, rather belatedly, to congratulate you on your work as Speaker. I know you have been at it for several days now, but it is my first opportunity to wish you well in your position.

I rise to speak on this bill which is very important for all Canadians, particularly western Canadians, since we have so many projects that must be governed properly, unless there is a negative effect on the environment. I know the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, as a fellow westerner, feels the same way, that every step must be taken to guarantee the protection of the environment.

I was struck today during Question Period when two ministers, the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, were asked about two important environmental questions, one concerning the pollution in Montreal River, and one concerning the more generic problem relating to older mines that stretch across the Canadian shield from the maritimes straight through to the Alberta-British Columbia border.

Since all those earlier generation of mines use the tailing process and use a great deal of chemicals which we now have found to be harmful to the environment, my question is a very straightforward one, what is the government planning to do?

The vacuousness of the answers—and I use those words advisedly—reminded me of the fact that despite that on the one hand of doing all these pretensions toward environmental impact, the lessons have not been learned by this government. In fact, this has not been incorporated into its daily life.

This has caused me to reflect on what is the difficulty here with this government in dealing with the environment. I would argue, Mr. Speaker, that this government does not understand how fundamentally the rules of the game have been changed and that Canadians are getting caught in a triangle they do not quite understand. They are getting caught in a triangle between the federal government in one corner, at times being the proponent of big projects such as the Hibernia project. In another