

*Water Resources*

that I share. As I look at the title of Bill C-144, the aspect of the bill which I would like to stress in my contribution is that which has to do with the management of water resources.

When the topic of water resources comes up, the people of northwestern Ontario become both interested and concerned, for this region of Canada has an abundance of the freshest water that is to be found anywhere in the world. I have had the personal pleasure of travelling in small craft along such rivers as the Winisk, the Severn, and the Attawapiskat, which flow northwards into James Bay. It is possible for one to dip a cup into these rivers and enjoy the sweetest, purest water imaginable; in fact, water that is safer to consume than that which you get from a tap in your own home. This is certainly not the place to tell fish stories, but there are in those rivers some of the largest and most enjoyable fresh water fish to eat that you can find anywhere in the nation.

We in northwestern Ontario want very much to preserve this precious resource of fresh water, along with as much as possible of the wilderness area that surrounds it. This is not for selfish reasons, not just for our own benefit and enjoyment, but rather for the enjoyment of those who live in what we sometimes refer to as the Great Lakes basin, an area that within the next 100 years will have a population of 200 million people. These 200 million people, living mainly in large, concentrated urban areas, will be looking northward for their recreation and for an escape from the rigours and tensions of urban living. We can offer them this in the region which I represent. It is therefore essential that industries, groups of people or individuals should not be permitted to pollute these valuable fresh waters or to destroy the recreational resources that we have in such great abundance.

It is always heartening to see industry respond in a positive way to the problems of pollution. Recently in the Thunder Bay area a major program was announced by the Domtar Company at Red Rock. The headline to the story indicated that Domtar was about to spend \$18,300,000 on an expansion program, and that \$7 million of that sum is to be used for pollution abatement. This company has been charged by the Ontario Water Resources Commission with polluting freshwater streams. I think the lesson is obvious—that corporations, like individuals, respond to good laws, and if these laws are acted upon, corpo-

rations as individual citizens will respond in a favourable way. My constituents and myself therefore applaud the federal government for introducing the Canada Water Act, which apparently is designed to permit the federal government to mount a systematic attack on water pollution problems jointly with the provinces, but unilaterally if necessary.

● (8:50 p.m.)

There have been those who have described the Canada Water Act as mere window-dressing, or as a ploy to convince the Canadian people that something is being done about pollution when in fact very little action will transpire. Just from looking at Bill C-144 it is difficult for me to judge whether this is the case or not. The effectiveness of this act, I suppose, depends upon the determination with which it is implemented by the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, and also the degree of co-operation which may be forthcoming from the provincial governments. The other question is how much the government is prepared to spend in the implementation of this act.

It has been said that the management of Canada's water resources is a regional problem, requiring a regional approach. Under the new act, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Greene) may enter into arrangements with the provinces and form joint committees for the purpose of consultation and development of programs and to co-ordinate their implementation. This could be established along national, provincial, regional or even lake or river basin lines.

It is said by the minister and his officials that where necessary regional-federal-provincial boards will be set up to take inventory of water resources, collect data on their quality, distribution and use, conduct research and direct a variety of programs designed to conserve and develop regional water resources to the full. Such a concept pleases us in northwestern Ontario, because we feel very strongly about regional development. We want a say in these plans and we want a say in government programs designed specifically for our region.

I think it is well known in this House that northwestern Ontario, a vast wilderness region in that rich province, has always been a little suspicious of governments, whether in Queen's Park or Ottawa. There is a strong feeling among the people I represent that they want to be involved and informed whenever important and far-reaching decisions are being made about our region and its