

*Government Organization Act, 1970*

department will include all the functions of the old Department of Fisheries and Forestry, along with a number of related services which have been moved out of other departments. There will also be some new directives for dealing with environmental pollution.

I feel this aspect of the bill setting up this new department of the environment, with an outline of its functions, is certainly an improvement over any existing federal efforts to deal with our widespread water pollution problems. However, Mr. Speaker, I feel that it falls far short of what we should be doing in this field. Several of the key requirements for adequate pollution control are missing from the legislation. Unless immediate action, such as I intend to outline, is taken on some of these matters I am afraid much of the legislation will be ineffective.

I should point out, Mr. Speaker, that on a number of occasions we have had re-organization of government departments in an effort to solve some of our economic and social problems. In many instances, the changes have not been too beneficial. The setting up of a new department is often the excuse for a further delay by government in carrying out much-needed reforms. The excuse is that the new department must be given time to organize its program and set out its priorities. However, if this new department is to be successful, there must be a wholesale change in this government's approach to our environmental problems.

• (5:00 p.m.)

If this policy change is not made, then all the switching around of government functions will do little to solve those problems which currently face us. It would be disastrous for our nation to try and lull the general public into feeling that an all-out attack by the federal government was taking place on our environmental problems when, in fact, very little was being done. There is little point in any government passing new regulations if they are not prepared to enforce the regulations which are already in effect and which, if they had been properly enforced in the past, would have eliminated most of the major pollution problems which now face us today.

Perhaps I should give several examples of the failure of the Canadian government to enforce pollution laws and pollution regulations which have been on our statute books for years. The best example is to be found in the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence river system. In a 1909 treaty with the United States, we find this reference to pollution:

It is further agreed that the waters herein defined as boundary waters and waters flowing across the boundary shall not be polluted on either side to the injury of health or property on the other.

Despite this clearcut directive that boundary waters shall not be polluted, we find that both Canada and the United States have totally ignored it, so that today parts of the Great Lakes system are among some of the worst polluted waters to be found on the continent. Just a few days ago in this House the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) tabled the final report of the

[Mr. Harding.]

International Joint Commission on Pollution of Lake Erie, Lake Ontario and the International Section of the St. Lawrence River. This report is a damning document of almost total neglect of this vast waterway by both the United States and Canada. It shows the complete lack of government concern over the years for the enforcement of pollution laws and regulations. Today, we are in the process of setting up programs to try and undo the terrible damage which we have caused to this water environment. The cost will run into the hundreds of millions of dollars and it will take a long period of time to restore in any real measure the quality of the water which we should have in this river system.

This failure of enforcement is related to practically every Act which we have in our statutes containing regulations pertaining to pollution. In most instances, these regulations have lain dormant for years and have been completely ignored by both the government and the general public alike. For example, no charges were laid under the Navigable Waters Protection Act during the years 1963 to 1969, for violations of those sections dealing with pollution of waters. Under the National Parks Act, only one infraction was recorded in the same seven year period. There were no pollution infractions charged under the Mining Act and the Migratory Birds Convention Act followed a similar pattern. A few infractions of the many hundreds of the Canada Shipping Act Provisions were reported and dealt with. The best attempt at enforcement was carried out by the fisheries department, and the many cases of mercury pollution, etc., which are turning up these days are a clear indication that a host of other charges should have been laid many years ago.

I feel it is essential for members to speak out on these issues. A reorganization of government departments is taking place. I presume this move is made with a view to having the new department operate more effectively and more efficiently. If the object of the government in setting up the new Department of the Environment is to lay a solid base for the solving of our environmental problems, then I feel that the move will be ineffective.

There is no doubt that there will be some improvement in dealing with our water resources, but even here the new department will be ineffective in many ways. I feel that the change has been made in an effort to lull the Canadian public into thinking that a real job will be done on all environmental problems. The mere structure of the new department, and the many missing components required to get at the basic cause of pollution, are indications that a major, all-out attack on our environmental problems will not be achieved by this reorganization.

To begin with, I feel the new department has been given the wrong name. I feel a better name would be the "Department of Renewable Resources". The structure of the department indicates that, in addition to the renewable resources of fisheries and forestry, it will be responsible for several former portfolios involving only renewable resources. This means it will be merely another of the competing departments of government. It will not be the effective, universal overseer of all environmental