

*Water Resources*

damage we have done in the last hundred years. But let us think of the alternate cost, that of doing nothing. To begin with, doing nothing is a threat to our entire way of life, and, yes, perhaps to life itself. Eventually, if we do not act to clean up air and water pollution, if we allow our environment to run down further we may upset the ecological and climatological balances of nature upon which life itself depends.

But even if the problem we face has not yet reached this peak, there are huge social costs involved. It is not hard to imagine the day—nor far off if we do not act—when there will be no place within easy range of our cities where a person can go to swim in a natural river or lake, or any accessible place where fish can still live, or any place to just walk beside a pleasant stream. Our society will have its two cars in every garage but there will be no fit outdoor place to which to drive them. Yes, we will have our superclean, automatically washed clothes, but will there be any place fit to walk in these snow white garments? These are staggering social costs, costs that neither we nor our children will have to pay, if we act now.

Then, too, there are the purely monetary costs. Water despoiled by man must be cleaned again for his own use. The cost of purifying the water we have first made dirty is high. How much better to clean up our effluents before we put them into our rivers. For we then have the double benefit of clean water while it is in the stream, and drastically lowered purification costs when we want to use it again.

There are other monetary costs as well. The salmon run in certain maritime rivers may be dying because of our pollution. With it would die a source of revenue as well as of pleasure. Our other fisheries are also threatened by pollution, and with them would go the livelihood and the way of life of thousands of Canadians. Our tourist industry depends in no small part on the cleanliness of our streams, rivers and lakes, and I need not remind this House of the importance of that industry. I say this, Mr. Speaker, we cannot afford not to plan for the future! For that future, without the use of our most important single resource, water, would be a bleak one indeed!

The problem has arisen from the unwise use of resources that come to us free of charge. The lesson which we can learn from the past is a vital one. It is simply this, that the unplanned and uncontrolled use of our resources, even though they come free, as

does water, can lead us to disaster. The first principle of the Canada water bill, and of the thinking of experts of all persuasions across Canada, is that no longer can we afford the unplanned and uncontrolled use of our water resources. No longer can each individual, each industry, each municipality, use our water resources as each sees fit. In that absolute and laissez-faire freedom lies the mistake of the past, and the disaster of the future. Those who use our waters must pay for that use, either by cleaning up what they discharge into our river basins, or by paying others to clean it up for them. This is the very gist of the Canada Water Act and the essence of its structure, that the user must pay for cleaning the water, for putting it back into the condition in which he found it and for improving it if indeed it requires improvement. The result, it is true, may be higher direct costs for certain goods and services. But as we look at these costs, we must remember that there will be savings to other users of the water who also have a right to expect that the water they receive will be clean and in good condition when it reaches them. We must remember, too, that there is no way we can avoid these costs and still maintain the quality of life. Everyone in society must eventually pay; this is the thing we must remember, and all of society will thereby gain.

How do we plan to proceed to achieve these things to which I have referred in general under the Canada Water Act? We have been engaged for many months in developing a plan of attack on these problems. This plan is encompassed in the Canada Water Act. But before I describe the bill to you in some of its major aspects let me describe for you—because it may be helpful to hon. members of the House—how we approached our problem.

Physically or geographically, Canada represents in some ways a highly unique case in the problems of water resource management. We have a small population, yet we are endowed with huge river basins and enormous water resources. We have exploited these water resources one at a time to further our economic development. Our rivers have been transportation routes for our largest single industry, pulp and paper. They have provided the vast amounts of hydroelectric power necessary to operate the extractive industries which have helped to give us the standard of living we enjoy. Yes, in some ways our waters, and our rivers in particular, have been the very backbone of our economic development.