

*Alleged Lack of Action to Combat Pollution*

Detroit Rivers in the course of my remarks because, surely, these constitute an area which no minister can claim to be within provincial jurisdictions. Surely, these are international waters—unless the federal government plans to build partitions to board off the water in the middle of each of these lakes and rivers.

The International Joint Commission began its research into the pollution of Lakes Erie, and Ontario, and the international section of the St. Lawrence River in 1964. It brought out an interim report in December, 1965 dealing with municipal pollution on the United States side of Lake Erie. It noted that 53 per cent of municipal waste from a population of 10 million people was receiving secondary sewage treatment, which was not too bad. Some 47 per cent of the sewage from that population of 10 million enters Lake Erie with either only primary or no sewage treatment. On the Canadian side the situation is somewhat better. From one and a half million people 79 per cent of the sewage receives secondary treatment, the remainder receiving only primary or no treatment whatever.

On the U.S. side of Lake Ontario only 25 per cent of the sewage from a population of almost two million receives secondary treatment whereas 75 per cent receives only primary treatment. From what little I have been able to find out in the last few days concerning the difference between primary and secondary treatment, I suspect that secondary treatment means they have taken out the smaller lumps. On the Canadian side of Lake Ontario the picture was again somewhat better; 82 per cent of the sewage from two and a half million population received secondary treatment, 17 per cent received primary treatment and only one per cent no treatment whatever.

In light of this, the International Joint Commission recommended to both the Canadian and the United States governments that appropriate action be taken by these two governments, in association with state and provincial governments, to ensure (a) sufficient purification of all municipal and industrial waste before discharge to achieve maximum possible removal of phosphates; (b) prohibition of the construction of combined sanitary and storm sewers and the initiation of programs of separating existing combined sewers and (c) an effective system of regular sampling of effluents discharged into these waters and their tributaries.

[Mr. Benjamin.]

What has been the result, Mr. Speaker? Three and a half years later, namely last September, the International Joint Commission made another interim report, and sad to say the volume of sewage disposal has increased during this four year period. This means that the same percentage of untreated or undertreated sewage is still entering those two Great Lakes and three rivers, and this after four years of reporting to governments, federal, provincial and state.

Into the Detroit River the city of Windsor is still pumping raw sewage, although the city corporation has announced that a new and improved sewage system will be opened within the next month or two. The position at Windsor is bad enough, even though the population is but 300,000 people, but in the Detroit area there are over three million people. Detroit is still operating a totally inadequate sewage treatment system, possessing an antiquated plant built in the early twenties. Their sewage barely receives primary treatment, yet it is still pumped into the Detroit River.

As far as the Niagara River is concerned, believe it or not, Mr. Speaker, but Niagara Falls, New York, is still pumping sewage that has only had preliminary treatment, which is just screening and which I gather means taking out the large lumps, into the Niagara River right across from the Brock Hotel. Only 8 to 10 per cent of the pollution of the Niagara River is from the Canadian side, 90 per cent is from the United States side. The boundary waters treaty between Canada and the United States specifies that one country shall not pollute the waters of the other. Both countries are continuing to violate that treaty. Hamilton city sewage system is providing primary treatment only, with no secondary treatment. The supervision of the Ontario Water Resources Commission, I am reliably informed, of Hamilton and other areas around Lake Ontario is inadequate. This is mainly due to the shortage of bodies and investigatory staff.

Pollution by municipalities is a social crime, a crime not only against nature but against future generations of Canadians. The cost of this kind of municipal pollution will have to be carried by the taxpayers in one way or another, since we taxpayers have been accessaries in our communities to the perpetrating of that social crime. The cost of preventing and overcoming this pollution cannot be borne totally by the municipalities