

Policy Statement on National Resources

difficulties arise from the fact that the government has allowed parliament to be sidetracked on these less important divisive issues.

I listened with a great deal of interest to the third spokesman from the government side thus far, the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen) who has just resumed his seat. He was definitely on the defensive this afternoon. We are used to this minister sounding off in resounding tones and indicating that everything in Canada is for the best under the leadership of this government. He was quite defensive and diffident in dealing with the lack of progress in the field of pollution both of water and of air.

What we should like to see, Mr. Speaker, and what we are asking for—there is still time; we have an hour or so before this debate concludes—is a clearcut statement from the government of intentions and objectives for the future, not a report of what has happened in the past. That was pretty well what the two ministers who have spoken thus far revealed in their remarks. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources went back to 1960 and then quoted figures which were current in 1963. I agree that there was a wonderful upsurge during that period under the leadership of the former government, but this is not what we want. Let us not dwell in the past. Let us deal with the problem as it exists at the moment, and let the government state what it intends to do in terms of arriving at concrete policies.

The federal government must provide national leadership in this field. It must provide the co-ordination that is necessary in the resource field in view of the problem created by divided jurisdiction. We have not had any specific information from government spokesmen about the intentions of the government in regard to these matters.

At the outset of my remarks I want to state that I, along with the hon. member for Kootenay West, believe that resource development is of fundamental importance not only in terms of the quality of life in this nation but also in terms of the economic well-being of all our people from one end of the country to the other. The hon. member for Kootenay West specifically asked me why I, as a former minister, did not do something about these matters. I think he will agree if he is objective that the outstanding policy of the Conservative government was one of development of our natural resources.

[Mr. Dinsdale.]

• (4:50 p.m.)

In 1961 we had an elaborate conference which was designed to come to grips in positive terms with matters that are still being discussed in the house today. Perhaps I should deal with that conference. We moved to set up a similar, comprehensive approach to problems of human resources. I shall not repeat in detail what was done. The hon. member who asked the question was in the house during that period, and if he speaks in this debate I am sure that he will confirm in general terms what I say. It is not good enough for us to look back over those years and speak about what was done then. We must use the body of information which was laid before the people of Canada and parliament in the resources for tomorrow conference. Governments in particular must use all this available information to bring about solutions through legislation.

Mr. Herridge: That is my point.

Mr. Dinsdale: Before this debate concludes that is what I wish to hear the government say. With the permission of hon. members I wish to refer briefly to what emerged from the resources for tomorrow conference of 1961. The conference was convened because of a growing sense of urgency and because we felt that Canada had failed to come to grips with her problems. It was a considered risk in the area of federal-provincial co-operation when the government of that day assumed its leadership responsibilities. Until then the buck-passing or log-rolling technique with respect to resources which came under the purview of the provincial authorities had been resorted to.

I read ministerial speeches which come across my desk in profusion. I am sure the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources will recall his appearance before the Canadian Bar Association convention in Winnipeg on September 1, 1966. The convention dealt with the subject of jurisdictional responsibility and I noticed that he was tiptoeing gently through the tulips on that occasion.

The national government must manifest leadership in this field. This must be done diplomatically, it is true. But it must be done if we are to have a national policy. Perhaps I should not speak of a national policy; perhaps the appropriate words are "federal policy". As the chairman of the steering committee which planned the resources for tomorrow conference, I remember being careful to use the phrase "co-equality" when addressing the participating ministers.