

Criminal Code

polluting substances into that river, just as there is more than one industry responsible for the deplorable situation on the once magnificent Ottawa river . . .

This problem is quite different legally from that posed by pollution entirely within provincial boundaries which then becomes a provincial matter unless the offence involves those waters affected by the Fisheries Act, regulations under the Migratory Birds Convention Act, national harbours board regulations concerning the protection of navigable waters or regulations under the Canada Shipping Act.

Certainly there is a lot to be done within provincial boundaries, and in every province in Canada, where a shirking of responsibilities on the part of elected officials combined with a base display of public apathy has given us a situation that is close to desperate in several areas.

The Canadian parliament has before it a bill which can correct a long standing and evil situation . . . For these public waters do not belong to us. They are there for us to use and to enjoy, for us to build a great nation upon. But they are not ours to defile and to destroy. They are a part of the priceless heritage it is our duty and our privilege to pass on to other generations of Canadians.

In concluding my remarks on the subject of water pollution I would stress that this is a matter that is becoming more and more serious. It will continue to grow in proportion unless effective measures are taken to halt it. It is for these reasons that I have raised this question to bring it to the attention of the public and to the attention of this government.

Mr. H. W. Herridge (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, I intend to speak quite briefly on this resolution and outline the general approach of this party to it and I shall leave the details to be filled in by subsequent speakers.

Before proceeding I must say I am glad to see that we have an expectant parliamentary assistant-to-be present in the house who apparently is going to reply to this resolution from the government side of the chamber. I hope that not only the hon. gentleman who has preceded me but all of us who speak in support of at least the spirit behind this resolution will ring a great big bell during this discussion.

This group gives its wholehearted support to the spirit and broad purpose of this resolution. We are not quite certain of the legal aspects of the situation or whether what the hon. member proposes is the most effective way to deal with the situation but we give him full marks for mentioning a question during his discussion today that has been raised by hon. members in this group for a number of years in this house. Hon. members in this group and in other parties have for years and particularly on private members' days dealt with the problem of pollution. It has also arisen in the house as a result of particular problems brought to the attention

[Mr. Stefanson.]

of hon. members from time to time. From my experience in the house over a number of years the great majority of hon. members are interested in this problem and concerned about it, but what strikes me as rather peculiar is that regardless of the long-time interest on the part of a large percentage of hon. members in this house we still fail to get very far in dealing with this most important problem of preventing pollution of our waters.

The purpose of this resolution as I see it is to amend the Criminal Code to make the pollution of waters a punishable offence and I am all for punishing people who destroy or mutilate our natural resources. However, before punishing people or enacting laws concerning natural resources I feel it is first necessary to have a policy of administration. It is necessary for us in the first place to establish a policy concerning natural resources which will be generally accepted by the federal and provincial governments.

It just so happens that this resolution aims to do something which is a facet of a resolution which I had the honour to bring before this house for a number of years, one that urged the calling of a dominion-provincial conference, as a result of co-operation with the provinces, for the establishment of nationwide principles and accepted policies for the conservation of our land, forest, water and soil resources.

We have dealt with this question from time to time, as I have said, although hon. members of this house and governments seem to recognize the necessity for action to conserve our resources progress is very slow indeed. The question of the pollution of waters is perhaps on a par with that of the conservation of our forests and they are closely related. These are perhaps the two most urgent aspects of the problem with respect to conservation of natural resources in Canada.

I suppose it is correct to say that pollution control involves and can be defined as the protection and preservation of the quality of public waters in order that they may serve their best uses. We have legislation which covers this in part. For instance, we have the Fisheries Act which concerns the pollution of sea water.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): And inland lakes.

Mr. Herridge: Yes, and inland lakes, as the hon. member for Essex East mentions. There is also the Navigable Waters Protection Act, section 2 of which deals with the prevention of pollution, I believe. I have to leave that to a later date; I understand it will come along later. That is a section of an act that has not been administered to any great extent. It has been the law, and yet there is