

Policy Statement on National Resources

introduction of that bill was responsible, during the past session of the British Columbia legislature the provincial government introduced legislation to broaden the pollution board's powers and duties. It may not be a perfect piece of legislation. That is a matter to be debated in the provincial forum, but what I am suggesting is that there are indications that other levels of government, in particular provincial governments, have been taking action in this field in the interval since the conference on pollution was held in Montreal a year ago.

The time is past due when we should have at least a general statement on the policy and intentions of the federal government. We should at least be informed of the direction in which the federal government is prepared to proceed. I am not trying to suggest that within the past year we could have developed a national pollution standards code, based on research, covering all the complex causes of pollution, or that all the research necessary to cope with the problem could have been undertaken. I hope the ministers concerned will not try to misconstrue my remarks in that context because I do know the fight against pollution will be a continuing battle over a period of many years.

However, I believe this house is entitled to know whether the government is prepared to take this matter seriously, whether it has done anything in recent months to bring together and expand the efforts of its various departments and agencies to combat pollution, whether it considers new legislation is required to deal with the problem and, if so, what the general nature of that legislation will be. If the Prime Minister could have given us such a statement yesterday perhaps some of us would be a little less impatient today than we are.

In the light of the events that have taken place since last year's pollution conference I submit, Mr. Speaker, that so far as this house is concerned the subamendment moved by my leader, the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam (Mr. Douglas), is well warranted and is one which all thinking members of the house should support.

Hon. A. J. MacEachen (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the subamendment moved by the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam (Mr. Douglas) is by way of an addition to the amendment. It calls upon the government to make a statement declaring its intentions and objectives

[Mr. Barnett.]

generally with respect to the matters mentioned in the amendment and then refers to:

—the need to take immediate steps to cope with air and water pollution, including appropriate national standards and any necessary amendments to the Criminal Code of Canada.

It is evident that the amendment and subamendment are very broad in character and that it was impossible yesterday for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Pepin) to give a full account with respect to all the aspects covered by them.

Mr. Douglas: Why?

Mr. MacEachen: He did attempt to cover as fully as possible the matters raised in the energy field, but unfortunately he was unable to tell the house of the very significant activity that is taking place in his own department with respect to water control and water pollution.

Mr. Douglas: May I ask the minister a question? In view of the fact that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources had unlimited time yesterday, as the minister replying to a motion of no confidence, why was it difficult for him to deal with this subject at that time?

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, I think that the opportunity to use unlimited time ought to be exercised with some restraint even by ministers of the crown. I thought the minister's speech was quite lengthy and covered a great variety of subjects, and if he did not feel he ought to take more time to cover the water policy of his department the fault ought to be attributed to the broadness of the amendment rather than to any lack of desire on his part.

I was surprised that the hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Barnett), who just resumed his seat and who has shown such a great interest in the field of water and air pollution, should have been so unaware of developments that are taking place under the leadership of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Obviously the hon. member has not been receiving the releases from the minister's office outlining the very broad activities currently going on in this field. If he has not been receiving them I think he should arrange to receive them because they are a mine of considerable information on current activities.

Mr. Douglas: When did you get them?