

Canadian Pollution Awareness Week

o'clock to ask whether the House would give unanimous consent for us to sit beyond five o'clock for half an hour or so in order that the Parliamentary Secretary may complete his speech, and that the hon. member from Burnaby-Richmond-Delta (Mr. Goode) may make his comments and thus conclude the debate. I am sure that we on this side would give our consent to such a proposition.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. members have heard the suggestion made by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). Is that agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Corbin: Mr. Speaker, before going on with my remarks, I should like sincerely to thank my colleagues for this opportunity to analyze thoroughly certain ideas related to the bill before us. I was afraid I would not have enough time to keep on with my remarks.

I was just saying that the bill would not change much in people's minds as to the seriousness of the pollution problem.

On the other hand, it could be that some people who have remained indifferent up to now will react as the result of a vigorous advertising campaign, that would put right under their noses the fact that the second week in March will be National Pollution Awareness Week.

They may hear such a proclamation over the radio, upon getting up in the morning. They may make a special effort in their personal life to contribute in their own way, to the fight against pollution.

That is possible but such a proclamation would not make things very different, I think. It is, nevertheless interesting to recall the general unconcern shown by the public as to the quality of the environment until the press took hold of the problem, first as sensational news and then gradually to deal with it as a permanent problem in our society.

As for the hon. member for Burnaby-Richmond-Delta, he objects to the second week in March being chosen. Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that we had no occasion to hear the hon. member explain why.

I for one see no objection to it. For the hon. member, the second week in March heralds the end of the winter and the coming of spring. However, because of the piling up of waste, decay and debris almost everywhere, especially along the roads, this would have been a fine opportunity to call the public's attention to pollution.

On the other hand, the first or second week in September might have been the appropriate time of the year to make people aware of pollution. During the first or second week in September, students usually go back to school, and God knows how much waste holiday-makers leave behind them.

Finally, this is a matter of personal opinion, and if the government decides to proclaim such a week, it may, at its discretion, set aside the week it deems appropriate.

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

Mr. Speaker, I note that this bill should normally be referred to the National Resources and Public Works Committee. This committee is probably a remain of the previous committee system, when no special committee on pollution existed. However, Mr. Speaker, a special committee is today responsible for studying the various effects of pollution on our environment, and it is ably chaired by the hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich (Mr. Anderson), now in the house.

• (5:00 p.m.)

In my opinion, the bill should be sent to that committee and not to the Committee on National Resources and Public Works.

Mr. Speaker, the members of the Special Committee on Pollution are already experts and take a real and personal interest in all questions relating to pollution.

It is interesting to note the great number of members who have taken the floor briefly this afternoon to support this bill. This indicates the major concern of all Canadians with regard to this problem which is getting worse everyday. We have yet to grasp the seriousness and implications of this evil. The NDP members have stated that this measure entailed no special harm nor good. They are sitting on the fence. You must be either for or against a measure and I would have liked them to state more precisely their position on this subject.

The opposition members have also expressed some interest in this bill. However, their speeches have been quite brief. It would have been interesting to hear them elaborate on this program.

However, hon. members should not forget that such a bill, if it is passed, will forcibly entail advertising expenses if we want its proclamation to have any effect. Sustained publicity in newspapers, weeklies and dailies, in magazines, on radio and on television, will be necessary. Much literature will have to be distributed throughout the country and particularly in the schools. It should be aimed mainly at the young generation.

I referred to schoolboys and schoolgirls, Mr. Speaker, but I could also talk about junior college and university students, young men and young women who make up a generation which more than any other in the history of the world is aware of the very serious threat of pollution.

[*English*]

In conclusion, I would say that if the people are not now aware of the stench, filth and noise lying around them, then God help them: they need new eyes, noses and ears. I do not think that a particular week set aside to make the public more aware of this problem will make very much difference in the long run. However, as I have said, I do not oppose the bill. For one thing, it will provide another good occasion for all members of the House to let the country know their personal feelings in regard to our efforts to abate pollution.

What the bill is probably trying to promote—at least, this was suggested by one hon. member—is the need for greater consciousness of improvement of our environment. I lay the emphasis on the word "improvement"—