

*Supply*

could there be than the example of the Great Lakes and that great St. Lawrence Seaway System.

International discussions can easily become deadlocked in an attempt to assign blame on one side or another or in an attempt to come to agreement on how to clean up the situation. I suppose the celebrated acid rain debate is a perfect example of this. The President of the United States has finally acknowledged that acid rain is indeed a problem. Upon the return of the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) from Washington, the President's admission was heralded as a major breakthrough in bringing the acid rain situation under control. Meanwhile, people not only here in Canada but in the United States gradually watched their forests waste and their maple trees die. At that point, we had only got to the stage of agreeing that there was a problem.

I suggest that we who live on this wonderful planet earth and in this magnificent biosphere are only seeing the tip of the iceberg, albeit an important tip. There seems to be countless problems dotting the landscape. There are countless time bombs just waiting to explode. Almost every time I pick up a scientific journal, I read about another threat to the biosphere. For example, we are told that the ozone layer is being depleted. That means that the consequential greenhouse effect is likely to change climatic conditions and raise temperatures. As we know, tropical rain forests are being depleted, thus affecting the biosphere, the atmosphere and the oxygen content of the atmosphere. We know that the deserts are growing. Of course, the subject matter at hand is recognized by all as underlying the dreadful pollution that affects our water and causes poisons to accumulate in our air.

Undoubtedly, many Members of the House have seen some of the recent studies which have gone beyond the issue of acid rain to the issue of other toxic substances carried in the air. These in turn will create serious medium and long-term environmental problems.

I suggest to my colleagues that the consequences of our biosphere being in peril are almost beyond our imaginations. Another ice age may come. The polar ice caps may melt. Huge sections of low-lying land are likely to be flooded. Plant and animal species are likely to disappear. Of course farmland may no longer be able to bring forth the crops and bounty which have made those of us in this country one of the best fed and healthiest people in the world. Indeed the situation is a very, very serious one on an international basis, and one which all Governments must be called upon to address.

• (1650)

As we discuss the situation as it applies to our Great Lakes and waterways system, I raise today with my colleagues the question of what we as individuals, not just as lawmakers in the House of Commons—or it may be Congressmen or Senators in the United States or other elected representatives in other countries—can do and should do about the situation. Let me offer from personal observation what I consider to be good news about what has happened in our environment,

largely through the efforts of individuals. Those Members of the House who are my age or approaching my age will have noticed a dramatic difference in the attitudes of individuals toward the environment. I remember growing up as a youngster both here in the Province of Ontario and later in the Province of Quebec.

**Mr. Gurbin:** How long ago was that?

**Mr. Johnston:** Perhaps the Hon. Member is not aware of it, but I recall how litter on our highways was deplorable and accepted, by and large. Cigarette cartons, packages, tin cans, and beer bottles were thrown out of the windows of automobiles as if it were the way to dispose of such items. It is seldom today that I see anyone throw litter out of a car window. It is not simply because we have anti-litter laws. I suggest that the culture has changed. Indeed there has been a greening of Canada and of America in the minds of our citizenry. People are becoming more responsible in terms of collecting garbage, in terms of keeping the landscape under control, and even in terms of their own individual pollution of lakes and rivers. I think individuals are much more conscious of the importance of preserving the environment, especially for generations to come.

Unfortunately there are issues today which really affect the environment and create a spectre of the kind I just described, namely, putting our biosphere truly in peril. Unfortunately those issues are really beyond the reach of individuals. They are and must be the subject of public policy. Of course, individuals will be there to ensure that politicians have the political will to make sure that the Great Lakes are cleaned up, that our waterways are not polluted, and that the kinds of doomsday scenarios from an environmental point of view which I have described will not occur. I believe that is happening. When one looks at surveys of public opinion, one sees that indeed the environment is very high on the Richter scale of public concern, as it should be. Hence, it will find its way into the public policy of all nations where environment has become a matter of great public concern.

I suppose one of the problems in the minds of many people is that while important, the environment may still be seen somewhat as a luxury for which inadequate funding is provided in a period of recession, or the axe falls on the environment when there are cuts to be made. As I just said, it is true that the environment is a legacy which we must leave for future generations. Unfortunately too many people in public life do not yet recognize that the future has a constituency. I believe that the future has a growing constituency, that people are becoming more and more concerned. I mentioned the polls and so on. The very fact that such debates are occurring in the House of Commons and in legislatures across the country is evidence of the fact that that constituency is growing.

However, I fear that often political programs to monitor, to protect, or to clean up our world will land on the chopping block, just as critical programs in research and development