

Great Lakes Pollution

of the IJC was perhaps the crowning achievement of a life devoted to the public service of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Sharp: I would also like to acknowledge with appreciation the help and support of the public in both Canada and the United States by participation at the commission's public hearings and in other ways. Without such public support this great undertaking, to overcome the Great Lakes water pollution problem, cannot succeed.

Mr. H. W. Danforth (Kent-Essex): Mr. Speaker, at the outset I would like to extend the thanks of my party for the courtesy of the minister in making a copy of his statement available to us prior to this afternoon's sitting.

What we have heard this afternoon contains both good news and bad news. I should like to deal with the good news first. It is good news that the minister made a short statement on the matter and that after six years the report has been tabled.

Now for the bad news. What we have before us in this report is a compilation of facts that were evident six years ago. I pay due respect to those who compiled the report because I am certain they did everything they could within the guidelines and regulations laid down for them. Nevertheless, as long as six years ago it was estimated that industrially, privately and commercially along the shores of the Great Lakes 2,800 commissions, agencies and bodies were studying pollution in the Great Lakes system.

The report contains some recommendations which, if implemented, will perhaps improve the situation. Unfortunately however, this government, like other governments before it, still seems to base everything on reaction rather than action. It talks of setting up even more committees, making more analyses, conducting more studies and giving the matter more consideration. Mr. Speaker, I do not think we have that much time left.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Danforth: Coming as I do from the shores of Lake Erie I see at first hand the tremendous problems that are caused by pollution. They are not simple because as a result of the actions of this government, the government of the United States, state governments and provincial governments the operations of some of our great industries have come to a halt. The fishing industry has been greatly curtailed because we are not certain whether the fish are contaminated, and until we have established the necessary standards and are certain the taking and using of certain fish is prohibited.

The tourist industry is also affected. People of the world will not come to Canada to enjoy the fishing and recreation in its waters if they feel the waters are polluted. Even worse, expansion of the agricultural industry is being impeded because we do not know what regulations will be established regarding the effluent from cattle feed lots which have become so prevalent because of the rearing of animals in confinement.

[Mr. Sharp.]

There will also be no expansion in the construction of atomic power units or in the development of lumber processing and of steel complexes until the government lays down guidelines and regulations which will enable long term investment in these primary industries. As an indication of how important this is, I point out that while we are delaying in this country the laying down of regulations, Canadian experts are developing a steel complex in Turkey, an atomic plant in India and lumbering in France. We are spending millions of dollars all round the world, money which we need right here in Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Danforth: In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a statement which, like an old law of physics, is a self-evident truth. No matter how many words or how much verbiage are used, the fact still remains that committees, discussions and studies will not solve the problem. It is evident that to solve it millions and millions of dollars must be expended. Governments on both sides of the water system must be willing to spend such sums now to deal with the problem of pollution and clean up the waters of the Great Lakes.

● (2:20 p.m.)

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, we too regard the minister's statement and the report that has been tabled as being of the utmost importance and urgency. The report demands a high priority of attention on the part of this and other governments. It concerns Lake Ontario, upon which my constituency abuts and which, to put the words of the report in plain English, is dying. It concerns Lake Erie which is already dead. But its importance extends to all the freshwater resources of Canada upon which the livelihood of many Canadians and the quality of life of many others depend.

The findings of the report are not new but they are clear. First, there is serious pollution on both sides of the boundary. Second, this is caused by wastes discharged in boundary waters and their tributaries by municipalities and industries on either side of the boundary. Third, urgent remedial measures are required. What is now required, Mr. Speaker, is not words but action, concerted action on the international, federal, and indeed provincial levels.

As I have said, the situation is not a new development. In 1909 Article IV of the Boundary Waters Treaty solemnly engaged the high contracting parties, as they were called, that the boundary waters and waters flowing across the boundary should not be polluted on either side to the injury of health or property on the other. This solemn engagement, made 60 years ago, has not been observed properly by either side.

In 1950, 20 years ago, the International Joint Commission produced a report on this very subject, which I have on my desk. The conclusions of the commission at that time were expressed in language almost identical with that of the present report. It said that the waters on both sides of the boundary were then being polluted.

With the treaty clear and the facts clear, what has been the reason for inaction? It has been due to lack of