

*Water Resources*

● (4:30 p.m.)

The system unquestionably has faults. There are those who claim the private enterprise system has lost its sense of purpose and morality. Hence, to some degree the disaffection of youth who refuse to subscribe to its purposes, and the unrest on the street and on the campus. Dissenters from Eugene Debs to the current disciple of dissent, Paul Goodman, have railed at its deficiencies; but perhaps Galbraith has put dissent in more useful terms in pointing to the deficiencies by refusing to tear down the house merely that we might repair the plumbing. He has, as I understand it, suggested reform rather than demolition. He has urged that the great corporations of the private sector who play a paramount part in the direction and purposes of our economy and society must devote a far greater proportion of their leadership, drive and productivity to the public sector as well as to private profit and the benefits to be derived from insiders of the system if the system is to survive in the tomorrows.

This surely is the great test of our times. Those of us who believe in the freedom and the individuality and the productivity of that system know full well that it must divert some of the great energies and production it unleashes to the quality of our life and our environment, as well as to the corporate profit motivation and to the financial well-being of its own. If it does not do so, the alternative will clearly be a greater control by government, more state-ism, and possibly an ultimate state control of the instruments of production which has nowhere, to my knowledge, proved either conducive to freedom or productivity. But if the system fails in these measures and in these directions to play a more useful part in the public sector then it will pass from the scene of history as did the systems of Egypt, the Byzantine empire, Rome or Greece when they failed to serve the people they purported to serve.

I suggest that here, in the Canada Water Act, we have one of the public documents which will help to determine in our time whether industry or the great corporations can in fact play their part in the public sector in helping to bring to our society a quality of life and an environment which is worthy of a great people. I believe they can and will do so. I believe that under the aegis of this bill we will find the co-operation of the corporations and the private sector and that they will play their part in this area of public demand to make this a better land and create an

[Mr. Greene.]

environment worthy of our tomorrows. I think hon. members will agree that this problem is too urgent and too important to become the playground of partisan bickering. I look for no politics in this and I doubt if anyone will derive any great political advantage from a bill as large as this and as costly as this to all Canadians. For this reason I welcome with an open mind suggestions from everyone, and particularly hon. members of this House, on how this Act may be improved and upon what further steps we can take to solve our problems.

We have no clear pattern to present. I do not think any country in the world on either side of the iron curtain has a clear, definite and perfect plan in respect of questions of environment and water control in particular. So, we have created a framework which we think is a valid one and have taken an approach after a very considerable study which we think is best for Canada, but we know we do not have all the answers. I have been in close touch with the provinces. I have received valuable suggestions from them and I expect to receive more. Indeed, it is only appropriate that the provinces have much to contribute to this bill for many of them have already taken great steps in the fight to preserve our priceless water resources. They recognize the problem as we do. Their work in the past has been vital and in the future, in co-operation with the federal government, their work will become invaluable.

I am sure hon. members of this House will also have a great contribution and input to make to the problem and to the ultimate detail of the bill. The fundamental significance of this bill precludes any dogmatic partisanship and I intend to consider all suggestions carefully. I will welcome them all. Oliver Goldsmith, two centuries ago, in bemoaning the loss of spirit and vitality of man in the face of industrialization, said:

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,  
When wealth accumulates and men decay.

It may well be that in Canada we do have decay in our purposes and in our spirit, with our high standard of living, in respect of things as important as protecting our environment and our water. But I do believe we in Canada have the will to act, and to act in time, if our spirits have decayed and if we have permitted the despoilation of our waters. I believe the will exists and, in fact, that the Canadian people demand that we act and act now to restore and preserve our waters and the quality of our environment.