

Clean Air Act

leave either us or the provincial governments with the belief that the federal government wishes to involve itself.

We might as well be honest about it. The provincial legislatures are interested in working with the federal government in such areas when money is to be provided. Provincial governments do not like to go out and spend money while the federal government sits back and says, "Go ahead with it, boys. We hope you do a good job because we have passed some laws which we hope will help the situation. You put up the money". This is where we ran into trouble in respect of the Canada Water Act, and I do not see any improvement in this bill. Money talks, and money is in short supply.

There is no indication that the federal government will involve itself in expenditure here, and the estimates which were recently tabled showed vast increases in spending but very little for the implementation of this legislation. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I do not see the likelihood of immediate, concurrent provincial legislation or provincial co-operation unless the federal government is prepared to do something in the financial field. This has not been indicated in the bill or even in the minister's introductory remarks.

At the beginning I said that the objectives of the bill are worthy. A real effort has been made by the drafters to cover the ground within the obviously limited framework laid down by government policy which, once again, is woefully lacking in respect of real co-operation with the provincial authorities. There are many things which undoubtedly could have been done to improve the bill. As I say, the drafters of this bill have carefully wound their way through the constitutional problems without actually meeting them head-on.

I hope this bill will be effective. We want to see it referred to the committee so that we will have an opportunity to do what we can to improve it. But so far as the fundamental principle is concerned, it is not there. The provincial co-operation to fill-out the legislative authority as between the two jurisdictions has not been provided, the groundwork has not been laid and we are left once again with a federal bill which is limited in its jurisdiction and which has no really effective means of controlling air pollution throughout the country.

Mr. Thomas S. Barnett (Comox-Alberni): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening with a good deal of interest to the speeches of hon. members on this bill. In many ways I found most interesting the remarks of the minister in introducing the bill, not because his speech was necessarily better than that of the hon. gentleman who just spoke, the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka (Mr. Aiken), but because, naturally, we look to a person who introduces a bill in this House to state its basic scope and purpose at second reading stage.

● (3:40 p.m.)

The minister, as he usually does when he gets on to subjects touching on pollution or on standards, waxed very eloquent. He stated his ideas with great determination. I suggest, however, that if one examines the realities

of the situation, the contents of his speech are somewhat misleading. I like to hear the minister say that he believes in national standards, whether he is talking about air pollution, water pollution or any other form of pollution. I also believe in national standards. I think these are ideas which should be promoted throughout Canada. I think that in particular those of us who happen to be members of the federal Parliament of Canada have a responsibility to seek to do that. However, a problem arises when we have a minister introducing a bill and creating the impression that there are, in fact, provisions of the bill that are not really there. This is the danger I see developing in respect of the bill we are now considering and in respect of other bills that have been dealt with in recent months.

If the minister had said in his opening remarks today that this bill was a beginning in moving toward national standards with regard to emissions that go into the ambient air, then I think his statements would have been more in accordance with the contents of the bill. But if I heard the minister correctly, he said categorically that the bill creates standards which are national in scope, which are Canada wide and which are not provincial or municipal.

These are brave words, the kind of words we like to hear coming from a minister with some responsibility over the control of the quality of the environment, whether or not he has the title. But if one examines the contents of the bill it becomes apparent that it is treading lightly on the constitutional eggs, taking great pains not to put any stress or strain on the fragile shells of the elements of our constitution, on the fragile sensibilities of some of the provincial authorities.

This may or may not be necessary or desirable at this point, in face of the realities of political life in Canada, in face of attitudes that are made evident from time to time by some of the provincial Premiers of Canada. If I wanted to explore this question in detail, I could perhaps use the Premier of the province of British Columbia as a point of reference for some remarks. But the fact is that this bill does not create national standards. I do not think that we in this Parliament would be doing a service to the people of Canada if we tried to create the impression that in this bill we are providing a complete and final answer to the problems of the regulation and control of emissions that go into the ambient air, to use the phrase that is used in the bill.

What I think we should be doing in discussing a bill of this kind is to emphasize that we are dealing with what I would term the constitutional building-blocks of a new Canadian Constitution. We are dealing with things that are, in this era of our history, of most urgent concern to Canadians everywhere. Part of our responsibility in discussing a bill of this kind should be to attempt to make the people of Canada aware that we are having to work within a very difficult constitutional framework when we start discussing such problems as are dealt with in this bill. Let us not kid either ourselves or the people of Canada that we are in fact creating standards that will be uniform and complete all across Canada by what we are proposing to do today.