

Water Resources Programs

phates in detergents. I think this is a rather misleading statement and worries me because people are being given charts. I have one here put out by Pollution Probe in Toronto which lists the amount of phosphates in the various detergents in Canada. I have been informed that this analysis deals with the percentage of the compound called tri-sodium polyphosphate which is actually in the detergent. In some cases this is shown as 50 per cent or more. Some detergents are shown to contain 37 per cent, 35 per cent, 27 per cent or 10 per cent. Some products on the market contain very little phosphate. This is the point I want to make.

The minister's department is basing its percentage on the content of phosphorous pentoxide, known as P_2O_5 . The amount of 20 per cent phosphorous pentoxide means 35 per cent sodium tripolyphosphate. This is a very interesting comparison. This evidence was presented during the committee hearings. I believe I have correctly understood it. The experts testified that with our formula a detergent containing 50 per cent phosphates would be cut to 35 per cent phosphate content. This is an over-all 30 per cent reduction. Although it is better than nothing, it is not nearly as much as the members of our party would like to see. This is a point that has worried the members of our party considerably. It is the reason these amendments have been put on the Order Paper.

Approximately 10 days ago, a report of the International Joint Commission was tabled in this House. The International Joint Commission set up a committee to present a special report on Lake Ontario, Lake Erie and the international section of the St. Lawrence River with regard to phosphates, oil and other matter. I am only going to deal with that part of the report relating to phosphates. The committee studied this problem for four years. Over 200 scientists, including some of the best in this country and the United States, worked on this problem. The report tabled 10 days ago in this House, which was prepared by this talented group of scientists, indicated that phosphorous was the main culprit as far as algae growth in the Great Lakes was concerned. It also indicated that nitrogen contributed to algae growth. I do not think anyone would dispute that fact.

The report clearly points out the reasons why we must act quickly on the problem of phosphates. I am not going to read all of the report, but it does contain some very interesting figures which I will give to the House at

this time. The report shows that in 1967 the total input of phosphorous from United States municipal sources into Lake Erie amounted to 35.7 million pounds. Of this total, 25 million pounds was from detergents. The Canadian contribution of phosphorous into Lake Erie was 2.5 million pounds of which 52 per cent or 1.3 million pounds was from detergents.

The picture is slightly different for Lake Ontario. The United States contributed 7.7 million pounds of phosphorous in total. Of this amount 5.4 million pounds was from detergents. The Canadian contribution from municipal sources into Lake Ontario is 7 million pounds. Exactly half or 3.5 million pounds was from detergents. When we look at the over-all picture, we find that the combined total for a year is 52.9 million pounds of phosphorous being put into these two lakes, of which 35.2 million pounds is from detergents.

The committee working for the International Joint Commission rightly pointed out that control of detergents would be the easiest and quickest means of cutting down the phosphorous content in the Great Lakes. While I realize that we in Canada are moving first on this problem and our total input is not nearly as high as that from the United States, nevertheless it is very substantial. The experts who testified before the committee indicated very clearly that even a small reduction would have a decided effect on the algae growth in the Great Lakes. They go on in their report to urge the Canadian government to move as quickly as possible to cut down the phosphate content as far as may be done, consistent with not dislocating industry too seriously. We are not making such a drastic cut as some people imagine, and I believe we could go further.

● (4:00 p.m.)

There is another point I wish to make. I believe we must place a deadline on the sale of detergents in Canada. It might be at the end of 1972 or it might be at the end of 1971. If we fail to do so, our warehouses will be loaded with packages of detergent containing a high percentage of phosphate and, by law, the manufacturers will be allowed to sell them to the Canadian people. If they get them on the market at reduced prices, you can bet your life some consumers will buy them, and the phosphorous will continue to pour into our water system. I am thinking particularly of the Great Lakes, where there is real danger of losing the western section of Lake Erie because of the tremendous algae growth.