

in order to feed at least that body of water as well as the St. Lawrence River whose water level dropped considerably for a few years.

The problem of the drop in the water level in the St. Lawrence River and in Montreal harbour seems less acute than it was for the last two or three years, but nothing seems to indicate that it will not come up again.

If we diverted the fresh water that is presently being lost in James Bay and Hudson's Bay to the Great Lakes, that might also help control pollution.

In industry as well as in domestic work, cleaning requires frequent rinsing. The large quantity of recoverable water that discharges in James Bay could, as it were, serve to rinse the waters of lake Ontario and make them at least purer.

This project, I am told, is being studied by the government of Ontario, thanks to federal grants, according at least to a statement by the Quebec minister of Natural Resources.

It seems the study on this project has not progressed as fast at Quebec government level, because the federal government did not grant any subsidies.

In this bill, it is stated that agreements must be reached between the federal government and the provinces.

To my mind, unless there is agreement with all the provinces, the industry no longer cares about the pollution problem.

I am confident that the interest of all Canadian provinces in the fight against pollution and in the conservation of our waters is such that they will not refuse to participate in this fight.

To date, some federal-provincial conferences afforded the ministers of natural resources the opportunity of consulting with each other. Such conferences should be held more frequently so that all the knowledge might be pooled, with a view to checking that serious problem.

The Ralliement créditiste feels that this bill is necessary to complete other imperfect acts; the government can always change it to improve it.

We feel that this bill should be given second reading, and referred to the Committee on National Resources and Public Works for a study in depth. If we feel that it is necessary to amend it, we will not hesitate to do so.

• (9:30 p.m.)

[English]

**Mr. Keith Hymmen (Kitchener):** Mr. Speaker, may I take this opportunity to congratulate the minister on his excellent and detailed presentation this afternoon on the introduction of this legislation. I am sure all hon. members agree that it is very nice to see one who is genuinely respected in all corners of the House, in this portfolio as well as the one he held previously, and as a backbencher, returned to something like his old form. We certainly wish him well.

Mr. Speaker, in addressing myself to Bill C-144, which primarily concerns the conservation of our Canadian water resources, I am naturally very much aware of the mounting anxiety in regard to pollution, which problem I believe brought about this legislation. No doubt I shall be tempted, as will other hon. members, to refer to the larger, over-all field of pollution which of course includes air pollution, soil pollution, water pollution and environmental pollution generally. However, I shall try to resist this temptation.

Water pollution in itself is not merely one of local concern; it is a global problem. The continued concern for this problem, both on a national and a world-wide basis, may well mean the difference between life and death for many. Malthus might have presented his famous revelation to the world in even more startling terms by saying: "The population of the world increases geometrically while the water supply on the earth is constant."

Fresh water is, of course, a very important and precious commodity, not only to us as Canadians but to every citizen and every nation in the world. We in Canada have perhaps been fortunate in this respect, as we have been in so many other ways. It is a fact that all the available fresh water on earth is only 0.325 per cent or one-third of 1 per cent of the earth's entire water supply. The Great Lakes, that important body of water which means so much to us on the North American continent, contains 25 per cent of the total of all fresh water found in all the lakes of the world. That is 25 per cent of all the water, Mr. Speaker, for one-half of 1 per cent of the world's population. This is why the action of the government in introducing this legislation and the provisions of the bill itself are so important, if not for ourselves then for the world at large.

I mentioned that I would try to refrain from diverging from the subject matter of the