

Water Resources Programs

my view such consultation, involvement and commitment by agencies and interested groups beyond this department are essential elements of water resource management. We have recognized this need in many ways. It is, indeed, the very spirit of the Act.

To demonstrate this spirit, even before this bill has been passed we have been establishing consultative committees across Canada. We have entered into joint planning arrangements with the provinces and we have consulted extensively with the industries immediately affected. And so, Mr. Speaker, we believe that we have gone far beyond the suggestions of the opposition in showing our intention, both by actions and in the preamble of the act, by providing the machinery for consultation and advice, and by being specific about the necessity for provincial concurrence at several important points in the process of management. I cannot recall any legislation before this House in which we have taken such great pains to ensure ourselves that in an area of divided jurisdiction we must and shall co-operate.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, I have tried to put before Your Honour and this House a total assessment of our success to date in drafting this major piece of resource legislation. We believe we have hammered out through these many months a bill that is essentially acceptable to all parties, to the provinces and to the public. We believe we have come as close to shaping an effective bill as the process of debate by dedicated men and women permits. The time has now come to implement the legislation. If it is successful we can all take pride in our achievement here today. If our success is less than complete, then hopefully the experience gained will guide our hand more surely another day.

No man can foresee all the complexities of the problem, because nowhere at any time has man learned to live in harmony with his environment. We certainly make no claim to be the repository of special wisdom on this complex matter. But we have done the best that experience, expert advice and theory can suggest. Now, Mr. Speaker, the time has come to move the focus of action beyond this House and set in motion all the processes and precepts discussed here for so many months. As Parliamentarians, I believe our task has come nearly to an end on this matter. We must have the courage to turn the job over to those experts in the public and private sector across Canada in whose hands water resource management and specifically pollution control ultimately reside.

Mr. G. H. Aiken (Parry Sound-Muskoka): As the Parliamentary Secretary has just said, Mr. Speaker, the third reading of a bill is the time at which we look back on what we have done and reflect on where the bill has succeeded or failed in its objectives. This should be particularly so with this bill, the Canada Water Act, which has been several years in preparation and so long in receiving final legislative action. In this regard, I point out that the bill was introduced on November 5, 1969.

It seems that the bill in both the original and final form is deficient in its main objective, the management of the water resources of Canada. We have talked a great deal about pollution during the debate on this bill. I make no apology for it. I was one who stressed the pollution aspect. The Parliamentary Assistant spoke of the searching inquiry that was made in the committee in respect of this bill. There was a full and searching inquiry. Yet I am sorry to say, except for the amendments the government itself proposed, no changes were made in the principle of the bill after it went to the committee. In fact, even amendments promoted by government supporters in committee, which were supported in the committee and passed, subsequently were reversed by the government when the bill was brought back to the House at the report stage. I believe that two opposition amendments were accepted. We are thankful for this, but I might point out they were so minor that they did not really affect the general direction of the bill. In spite of all the assurances we had that the bill would be carefully considered and would be altered in principle, and although it was altered extensively by the government, no opposition motions were accepted except two very small ones.

• (3:50 p.m.)

I raise this matter because of another bill which is before us, Bill C-197 in respect of the national farm products marketing council. Some members are receiving letters which ask why we do not allow that bill to be referred to the committee so that it can be amended. This is a laugh or a false premise because I would point out that bills sponsored by the government never get anywhere in the committee unless the government so desires. It is an exercise in futility in most cases.

Even since this bill was introduced in the House other events have overtaken it. We thought this bill would provide the founda-