

Supply

quality, which really means the interest of future generations in health, in the quality of the products which we consume and will be consuming, the cost of production where water is essential, and the cost of consumption as well in every household.

Scientists are telling us that toxic contaminants represent the greatest immediate threat to the interest of future generations because of the time which is necessary to remove them from water through natural processes. That time is exceedingly long. We are also told by scientists that some actions of the present generation so degrade the quality of water that future generations will have less flexibility in using water. In some areas waters have become so polluted that certain uses such as for beaches, swimming and municipal water supplies are in danger or are even precluded. Scientists are also telling us that contamination of fish and the destruction of forms of plant and animal life is taking place.

Scientists are reporting persistent toxic contaminants in the Great Lakes and, inevitably, in the St. Lawrence Basin. What this means is that present generations may reap short-lived benefits from exploiting water as a sink for waste chemicals only to pass immense costs on to future generations. The interests of the future users of water must be protected in light of the scientific reports we continuously receive. We must have, therefore, a commitment to action and to specific programs by the Government.

● (1140)

We have two principles to guide us; first, the conservation of the quality of water for the next generation. It should be in the same condition, not worse than we received it from previous generations. Second, we must conserve our options. We must conserve the diversity of the natural resource base. In applying these two principles, there are two methods we can adopt and follow; first, the correction of present abuses which have led to the degradation of our water and, second, the prevention of similar processes from reoccurring in future.

But what is the record of the Government, this so-called Progressive Conservative Government which is neither progressive nor conservative in terms of the environment? There are specific questions to be asked as to what the Government is doing about the Niagara River and what are its long-term plans? How does it plan to protect the water and the health of future generations? If industry needs incentives to accelerate sewer separation procedures, proper monitoring and installation of modern equipment, and if municipalities are increasingly in need of help with sewer treatment and the rehabilitation of creeks, rivers and other water bodies, what does the Government plan to do about it in the second year of its mandate?

I will give a brief chronology of Government action beginning in October, 1984, when the first very important Niagara River Toxics Committee report was produced jointly by Canada and the United States. There has been silence on the recommendations contained in this report. One month later, in November, 1984, the Government shelved the Guelph Tox-

icology Centre. So far we have lost two valuable years in launching a centre of excellence which is badly needed in order to better understand what is happening in the environment as a result of the presence of toxic chemicals. The government also cut funds from the National Research Council. It cut an important secretariat which, among other tasks, had to deal with toxic contaminants. The Government cut the Canadian Wildlife Service by \$3.8 million. What a shameful performance on an issue which is becoming more and more visible and a source of preoccupation to Canadians.

In March, 1985, the Government decided not to seek the annual amount of \$2.5 million from Treasury Board to conduct research along the Niagara River. It replaced it with a \$1 million fund per year with private institutions on any topic under the sun, thus the momentum on the Niagara River is lost. Two months later, in May 1985, the former Minister of the Environment finally looked into the matter, went to Washington to discuss the situation of our international river and promised a plan for full and speedy action along the Niagara River. In October 1985, the head of the Environment Protection Agency of the United States, Mr. Lee Thomas, came to Ottawa. There was a meeting but there were no statements, and no action forthcoming. The plan which was submitted by Mr. Thomas, which was public domain south of the border, was kept under wraps in Canada.

In December 1985, the Royal Society of Canada and the National Research Council of the United States jointly produced an important and substantial report which received front page coverage by the media, because of its significance. It was produced by funds from The Donner Foundation. Since then there has been silence; no action, no reply, nothing.

In January of this year we hear there were two vacancies filled on the International Joint Commission which, as you know, Mr. Speaker, deals with these matters virtually on a daily basis. These were two vacancies which had been unfilled for some 14 months. But unfortunately the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) ignores a wealth of talent which is available and chooses to resurrect from the mausoleum of Tory "has-beens" two gentlemen, Mr. Fulton and Mr. Welch, whose familiarity with Great Lake issues match that of a cobra at the North Pole, to put it mildly.

What a disillusionment, Mr. Speaker, considering the talent which is available from non-government groups, from competent retired civil servants with long experience, and from other quarters. That was a real demonstration of the lack of understanding on the part of the Government as to the meaning and importance of having well equipped and prepared individuals working on the Canadian side.

Last week we received the second report on the St. Clair River. The Minister of the Environment (Mr. McMillan) described it to the media as the end of a saga and announced to the world that contaminants and toxic chemicals will be checked one day when we have a brand new Environmental Contaminants Act. How naive can one be to think that the daily operations of the industries, past and present, can be improved by legislation yet to be written, let alone passed?