

Water Resources

For example, Ontario has an excellent Water Resources Commission which has been dealing with pollution control for about 14 years. At the same time, the federal government has under the aegis of the minister established at Burlington the Canada Centre for Inland Waters and has proceeded with its water quality research and control program without any question or hesitation. The federal government acting within its own jurisdiction set up this centre and there is no objection to it whatever; indeed, the province of Ontario has a centre right beside it. Another example is this: we did not hear the province of Newfoundland objecting when the Department of Fisheries effectively stopped the pollution of Placentia Bay. We have not heard the government of Ontario object when the federal government has taken charge in many of these areas. They recognize that there is a federal responsibility in this area, and I believe they are prepared to accept it.

The federal government is not the natural enemy of the provinces, especially when it is spending money within its own jurisdiction. Neither should the federal Parliament, acting in its own field, be subservient to or dependent upon provincial legislation. That is exactly what we are doing in this bill, because provincial refusal makes the bill useless. At the same time, provinces which are proceeding to combat pollution within their own field should not be limited by federal legislation.

Our alternative to this bill is simply this: we should have a federal pollution control act, or water act, in which the federal power is declared and acted upon. The federal government could then proceed with its own program, at its own expense and in its own way. Provinces willing to act, or which are already acting within their own field, would welcome a partnership with the federal government. A significant example was quoted by the minister himself this afternoon: there is no authority under this act to ban the use of detergents or other polluting agencies throughout Canada.

The federal government certainly has the power, and I believe it could and ought to assume that power under any bill passed by Parliament. The government has the authority to do this, and it is not too late to do so. I suggest that such a provision could very well be included in the bill and that it would be welcomed. In provinces not active in their own field, and there are undoubtedly examples, Canadians would have the benefit of the federal work and protection.

Mr. Speaker, with this clear alternative before it—it has been suggested that the authority is there—and in view of the introduction of this complicated, difficult and ineffective bill, we can only assume that the government is not prepared to spend money or to take responsibility for pollution control, but intends to pass the problem as quickly as possible to provincial and local agencies.

A start has been made. The minister has set forth on a difficult course. We hope he will have a different bill to administer when we have finished dealing with it. Whatever program we end up with, I think I can assure him that this House will wish him well and support him in carrying out the best legislation that Parliament can produce.

Mr. Randolph Harding (Kootenay West):
Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to have an opportunity to speak in the debate now taking place in the House. Before I proceed any further I should like to say a word or two about the preceding speakers. This afternoon we heard from the minister. I must say it is good to see him becoming increasingly active in the House. We all sincerely wish him a full and complete recovery of health. While I intend to be rather critical of several aspects of the legislation which we are discussing this afternoon, I am quite certain that the minister realizes there is nothing personal in my remarks about the draft legislation before us.

In his speech this afternoon the minister was rather poetic in spots but his message came through quite clearly. It seemed to me the message was that this federal Liberal government has no real plan for solving Canada's pollution problem. It has given up any pretext of leading a vigorous fight against pollution. It is to a large extent unloading the problem of pollution and the related costs on to the provinces and the municipalities. If there are no national anti-pollution standards, there can be no enforcement under an amendment to the Criminal Code. It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that this government has again proven itself ineffective in dealing with one of the major problems facing this nation, that of the pollution of our environment.

● (8:20 p.m.)

The preceding speaker, a spokesman for the official opposition, made a number of interesting points and I agree with most of them. I, too, feel that this bill in its present form will be ineffective in tackling the grave pollution problems our nation faces. It seems to me that the government has almost deliberately passed the pollution problem on to the