

Adjournment Debate

ment is taking to avert this threat and to ensure that in the future this situation will not recur. I am referring to the vast public works project in the United States which, if completed, will pollute the waters of two important river systems that flow into Canada.

This American undertaking, known as the Garrison diversion unit, is located in the state of North Dakota. Construction is already well advanced. This project is designed to divert large quantities of water from the headwaters of the Missouri River and, through a vast network of dams, dikes and canals, irrigate about 250,000 acres of American range and farmland. The run-off waters would then be diverted into the Souris and Red Rivers which flow into Canada in the province of Manitoba. It is these run-off waters which pose the threat of water pollution. By flowing over and through the arid North Dakota soil, the run-off water would acquire a heavy load of dissolved salts and other matters, with the result that the level of salinity in the Red and Souris Rivers would be raised to harmful concentrations.

The consequences of this made-in-U.S. pollution in Canada would be numerous and potentially devastating. The water supplies of the cities of Souris and Portage la Prairie, and many smaller communities as well, would be rendered undrinkable. Economic and social development would be stunted as the river waters would be not only unpalatable but also useless for certain industrial processes. The use of the water for irrigation in Canada would be cut off, even though such use would not itself be polluting. The natural ecology of the river systems would be disrupted, thus posing a wide-ranging danger to fish, animal and plant life.

● (2200)

Such water pollution would clearly stand in violation of the 1909 Boundary Waters Treaty between Canada and the United States which states in article 4 that "waters flowing across the boundary shall not be polluted on either side to the injury of health or property on the other." It would further violate principles endorsed by both the Canada and United States governments in the Declaration on the Human Environment at the 1972 Stockholm conference.

The Garrison diversion unit was first conceived in 1965, and since then some \$60 million has been expended in construction of diversion facilities. I have learned that Canada did not become interested until 1967, and only in 1971 did serious consultation begin either at the diplomatic level or between Canadian and American technical experts concerning the hazards we are facing. Last week we learned that the matter of transboundary pollution in the Souris and Red Rivers will be referred to the Canadian-American International Joint Commission for study. Canadians, of course, must applaud this move, but it is astonishing and of grave concern that not until this project has been under way for eight years and large sums of money have been invested has our government been able to persuade the United States to take notice of our very genuine complaints and to take action on them.

We may expect, in light of our experience, that the IJC study will be thorough and fair, but its report will not come soon. Will the minister inform the House whether or

[Mr. Knight.]

not, pending completion of the IJC study, the American government has agreed to place a moratorium on all further construction on the Garrison diversion unit so that the Canadian people will not be faced with a *fait accompli*?

It is widely recognized that the key issue in making public policies for the control of pollution is good planning—it is the difference between taking preventive measures and trying to clean up the mess afterwards. In future instances Canada must be assured that the Liberal government gets in on the ground floor in defending our environment if it is threatened by the projects of other nations.

Accordingly, I ask the minister: Does the government intend to propose to the U.S. that the 1909 Boundary Waters Treaty be supplemented by further standards laying out explicit standards for the water quality of transboundary lakes and rivers? Furthermore, so that formal Canada-United States consultation and study on water pollution matters can be rescued from its current ad hoc level, will the minister recommend that the International Joint Commission be given the power to review and to report on all relevant issues without the need for a prior formal reference from either country or, in fact, as at the present time, from both countries?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre De Bané (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, we have been aware for some years now of the American proposals for diverting waters from the Missouri basin to supply the Souris river basin for irrigation purposes.

This diversion has been and still is a source of concern for the Canadian government and that of Manitoba because of the possible serious deterioration of the water in that part of the river which flows in Manitoba.

We have repeatedly expressed our concern to the American government, both officially and informally. Our most recent notes to the American Department of State were dated January 25, 1973 and October 23, 1973; in addition, there have been several written and oral exchanges between our embassy in Washington and the Department of State since 1969.

[English]

As envisaged at present, almost all the water used for this U.S. irrigation project would, following use, be returned to waters entering Canada. Without going into all the details of the proposal, the effects we are interested in are the following. First, the tremendous increase of total dissolved solids which would seriously impair the water quality of the Souris and Red Rivers in Manitoba to the extent that the water would not be usable for either human consumption or irrigation in the state in which it enters Canada. Second, very hard, unsoftened water may also affect certain industrial activity, such as laundering and food processing. Water at this level of hardness may also be marginal for irrigation purposes. Further, the increase in nutrient loading may be critical in southern Lake Winnipeg which is presently close to a state of advanced eutrophication. Third, moreover it is apparent that the project as presently envisaged is likely to result in other serious problems of water quality which have not