

Water Resources

The problems experienced by the people of my riding last summer were probably unique to all of Canada. All of us have talked about pollution and the dangers and serious effects it will have upon our environment; but the people in my riding were the victims of this terrible tragedy. A large number of them had their livelihoods affected. Indeed, in many respects their chance to earn a living from their trade and vocation completely destroyed.

A number of questions with regard to that tragedy have not been answered. I am now trying to get these answers from the government. This government had knowledge of the problem that would exist with the establishment of the phosphorus plant. It has been suggested that reports were exchanged by the federal government and the provincial government, the company itself and the Bedford Institute of Oceanography. I contend that the people of that area who suffered this injustice have a right to know all the facts concerning the pollution of their water, the cause of that pollution and whether it could have been prevented by the federal government and the provincial government. I hope the information I have requested will be forthcoming in the very near future because the people are entitled, as I am as a Member of Parliament, to it.

The House is entitled to this information. I ask the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the information which I am so anxious to obtain is made available to me. I consider it my duty as a Member of Parliament to join my colleagues on this side of the House in their efforts to have the Canada Water Act amended so that it will contain the anti-pollution measures needed to save Canadian waters. I am sure we have the support of all Canadians who, like us, are demanding an end to the continual corruption of our natural environment.

Our party has consistently demanded tough federal action to deal with pollution. The government has responded to our demands and the demands of the Canadian people with the Canada Water Act—a pitifully weak and wishy-washy bill which in my opinion betrays the hopes and expectations of all Canadians.

• (9:30 p.m.)

Mr. Barry Mather (Surrey): Mr. Speaker, in rising to take a brief part in this discussion of the Canada water bill, I do so very conscious of the fact that the people in the part of Canada from which I come, the lower mainland of British Columbia, are perhaps more

conscious and more concerned about the dangers of pollution in all its forms than the people in any other part of the country. In British Columbia we now have more than two million people. Over one-half these two million people live in less than one-half of one per cent of the land area of the province. I am speaking of the lower mainland area from which I come. There is a concentration of population comparable to that of many older industrial countries of Europe.

Through that area flows the Fraser River, into which over the years the waste from homes and industry has been discharged. The people of the lower mainland of British Columbia are extremely conscious, and daily reminded, of the problems and health hazards of pollution either by water or air. I should like to briefly cite three or four recent developments in this area in regard to pollution. First, a week or two ago the International Salmon Fishery Commission approved an investigation of the Fraser River to determine the level of the pollution and the extent to which the pollution there is responsible for the reduction of the fishing runs over the last several years.

Second, next year British Columbia will be celebrating the centennial of that province's entry into confederation. It has been seriously proposed to the centennial committee of British Columbia that a major project which might be undertaken would be the cleaning-up of the Fraser River starting in 1971, the year of our centennial of confederation. In the knowledge that the federal government has granted the province of Manitoba for its centennial celebration this year the sum of \$6 million or \$7 million, which I think is excellent, the people of British Columbia are looking for at least a similar grant for the purposes of their centennial celebration in this coastal province.

Another development of public concern with relation to pollution in British Columbia is the organization and spread of a voluntary, anti-pollution organization called the Society for Pollution and Ecology Control, in short SPEC. This group has branches in many parts of the province; the organization is growing almost each week. The concern of this organization is to find out how individuals can work to combat air, water and land pollution. I believe this organization is doing an excellent job and is setting a good example to the public authorities in British Columbia in this field.