

the nuclear weapons they feel they need for protection against someone else. One thing is crystal clear as far as nuclear devices are concerned, and that is that if a nuclear war breaks out mankind is doomed, regardless whether you hear the explosion or the fired shots. This is the story we have to get across not only to the people of Canada but to the people of every nation of the world.

● (1700)

It is for this reason that we welcome this beginning by the government to develop a philosophy and some guidelines in respect of certain products which might be manufactured by companies in years to come. The minister mentioned certain problems in respect of nuclear testing, and he also referred to DDT. The world thought DDT was one of the greatest things ever discovered for mankind, and it is still being used in some areas of the world today. We did not understand what the use of DDT was doing to our food chains through an accumulative effect. We now know that a number of species in various parts of the world are endangered because of the use of DDT. It has been found in the Arctic, the Antarctic and on islands hundreds and thousands of miles from habitation that certain animals and birds have traces of DDT in their systems. DDT has an accumulative effect which works its way through food chains which are absolutely essential to the survival of mankind as well as to the survival of many other species of life on this planet.

This legislation will for the first time attempt to stop this type of production and usage of poisons in the form of contaminants getting into the air, waters and the earth, eventually coming to reside in mankind and doing a tremendous amount of damage. As we look at the bill we see a number of interesting points. I have gone through it very carefully and closely and, as a number of hon. members, feel that many of the points can be dealt with at the committee stage. There are, however, one or two things I should like to draw to the attention of the minister today.

At page 12 there is a reference to a one-year limitation period. If a company allows some contaminant to get into the air or water, it cannot be held responsible for the damage after a period of a year. I suggest in all humility that one year is far too short a period. Let us consider the example used by the minister when he referred to mercury compounds being used in pulp mills. These compounds get into the water and it takes many years before the companies or other individuals realize that mercury poisoning is taking place in these waters because of the use of chloral-alkali. In Canada today we have lakes and rivers in a number of areas still closed to fishing and recreation simply because of mercury contamination which took place many years ago. This is an example of why the one-year period is too short.

I do not think society should be saddled with the cost of cleaning up these contaminated waters, and unfortunately we have been saddled with this cost in the past. If we have to do any cleanups of mercury deposits in our rivers and lakes the cost will come out of the public treasury just as did the cost to clean up DDT and other contamination because we did not lay down regulations in time. I suggest that the minister take a pretty careful look at this part of the bill to see whether there is something that can be done.

Environmental Contamination

I think the responsibility of the companies should carry on for longer than the one-year period.

There is another point about which the minister spoke that I think is very interesting, and that is the establishment of an environmental contamination board of review. I think this is a step in the right direction as I feel such a board of review could be extremely useful. The members of this board would certainly have to possess some degree of expertise if they are to investigate and handle these problems, but I would hope that the membership will include laymen who also have knowledge and expertise in this field. Sometimes there is a tendency when we set up these boards to look to the academic world, leaving out others who have a great deal of practical experience, and quite often it is those with the practical experience who can come up with the solutions required in this day and age.

As I indicated earlier, there may be a large number of minor suggestions made during the committee stage. Once the bill reaches the committee I presume we will have a general discussion about the principle contained in the clauses. If we have amendments to offer I can assure the minister that we will see they are drafted well in advance in order that he will have time to look them over and decide whether the incorporation of them in the legislation will improve it or otherwise.

The hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Fraser) talked about a schedule. I certainly feel that a schedule setting out the classes of materials to be prohibited should be provided to hon. members at an early date. This is an extremely important and key clause in the bill. One of the key areas is that in respect of percentages of concentrations that will be allowed, and again this is a mighty tricky subject, one that quite frankly I am not competent to judge. I think we must have engineers and biologists who are extremely expert in these fields give us information about the effects of even extremely minute concentrations.

In closing, I should like to make one final suggestion. We must have a definition of "environment" somewhere in this bill. Dictionary definitions are not adequate. We must have a definition which will give us an idea of exactly what we are considering in this bill in the way of the environment. Again, Mr. Speaker, you might not agree that a definition of environment is necessary, but I certainly feel it is.

● (1710)

Finally, I want to congratulate the minister for bringing down this bill. It is certainly a step in the right direction. I would like to see it get through the committee and I hope we can improve it by amendment so that this environmental legislation will give a lead to other countries to proceed along similar lines.

Mr. J. R. Holmes (Lambton-Kent): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to participate in the debate on Bill C-3 to protect human health and the environment from the release of substances that contaminate the environment. As my colleague the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Fraser) indicated earlier, of course we support