

Water Resources Programs

Again, the implementation of any plan in any water management basin will have to be approved by the federal cabinet, and the moneys made available to whatever degree the federal contribution is required. So here again, we will get an assurance of co-ordination, an assurance that there can be no competition in waste or in pollution.

I think hon. members, if they will consider the proposition, could not conceive that a federal agency, or a federal representation on an agency would permit one province dealing with a body of water to have lower standards than another province dealing with the same body of water. So, certainly the question of co-ordination is the essential question when one is concerned with the possible variation of standards across Canada, and I can see no more relevant element in that question of co-ordination, to assure that the fear of different standards does not become a reality, than the co-ordination provided by the federal representation.

There are those who allege that some simple panacea like standards set from Ottawa in advance, without knowing the mix of uses in a particular basin of water, without even consultation with local authorities who are concerned over management of the basin, would be the solution to all our problems. I do not believe that such would be the solution. I believe that the water basin approach which has been approved of and which is heartily supported by any authority to which I have referred, and which is accepted in the scientific world as an authoritative reference, is the proper one and the best one for Canada. We will achieve uniformity, which certainly is necessary if we are to have sound water management, through the presence of a federal representative or representatives, because in virtually all water basins in every area of management there will be more than one federal representative. There will be representatives from my department, and in any water basin where fisheries has a major input there will of course be a representative from the Department of Fisheries. There may be representatives also from other federal departments.

As I say, our liaison through the inter-departmental committee on water which is representative of 13 departments, the ultimate co-ordination by cabinet, and the process of voting funds for the implementation of management plans will assure that uniformity and will assure it on the sound and proper basis. It will assure that, in the first instance,

the management of any area be on a water basin principle, and be permitted to have the input of the provinces, which is required by the constitution. It will also permit the maximum participation by the local levels of government that not only have a right but should properly be represented on water basin management authorities.

Quite often those people who are closest to the areas of the waters, and who have to live with them, have worked for years to manage the waters in the past, can put a more useful input into their effective management than a word from on high might do, as my hon. friend from Kootenay West would have us do, even though that ultimate decision from on high might be made by the very altruistic Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. I think a local input might be even preferable to that source of authority and decision.

• (4:20 p.m.)

The hon. member for Kootenay West referred to one item which I think should be cleared for the record because it leaves a very unfair connotation. He indicated that the committee, after a year's study, brought in a unanimous report a year ago with respect to a national water quality standard. However, my research into the matter indicates that there was hardly a year's study before the committee gave its first views on this matter. This is a new subject and there are many who have changed their original concepts, their original thoughts, after study. There are others who, having once made a decision which seemed to be good politics, never changed their minds, never bothered to read any of the authorities because they might get confused. They would sooner stick to that political decision, rightly or wrongly. I do not think that sticking to the same opinion, right or wrong, and after having sat through a myriad of committee meetings in which expert evidence was heard, then ignoring the experts by saying, "they must all be wrong because they do not agree with what I thought in the first place," is serious opposition of the kind that might be useful to the committee. Some of the people on the water committee did have an open mind, did listen to further evidence, and did have second thoughts when they heard it.

An hon. Member: They got the message.

Mr. Greene: The hon. member for Kootenay West referred to the fact that the committee sat for a year before coming to a conclusion as to the so-called uniform standard. I