

that part relating to the environment and attempts—imperfect though they may be—to consolidate all federal legislation dealing with the environment within some over-all authority, I am in full accord. After all, the earth is our home and our only home; we do not know what we will find on the moon or on Mars, so we have no other home to which to go. Consequently, a large number of people are deeply concerned about the permanent damage being done to our environment on earth and at the delays in rectifying the situation. As far as Canada is concerned, I do not blame the minister for these delays.

Eight years ago I was a member of a committee of this House—I believe, Mr. Chairman, you were on the committee as well—that dealt with environmental questions. The committee became involved in a study of the effects of agricultural pesticides and herbicides, and also had an opportunity to study the book “The Silent Spring” written by the late Rachel Carson. I believe this was in 1962, and this book was branded by some as being far too radical.

In light of what we know today, certainly it would not be so considered now. However, at that time some members of the committee thought that Miss Carson had made a very valid case. Her case was buttressed by statistical information and records, and I, myself, think that the committee rather cavalierly dismissed some of the propositions which had been advanced. Since that time there is no doubt whatever that the earth's environment has been even more poisoned by continual use of pesticides and herbicides. Within the last year the government has begun to recognize this, but who knows what incalculable and permanent damage may have been done in the interval? I think it will take generations to discover the effect that these poisons may have on the human species and other living organisms that inhabit the world.

I could give a lot of other illustrations but I do not have the time to give the details of all of these intricate constitutional arguments. In my opinion, if the people of this country had a choice they would want this subject handled in one way by one authority, the federal government, and not by 10 provincial governments. This would not preclude the implementation of policy at the provincial level, just as is the case with our national health and welfare programs. It is probably more logical and sensible that these programs be implemented at the provincial and possibly even the regional level. However, there must be one over-all, overriding, national, policy-making body, which can only be the federal government.

I am convinced that as the people of Canada begin more and more to realize within the next year or two the need for this, the proposition I have put forward will become accepted; and I think the minister feels this way, too. I did raise this question on Friday. The minister has referred to international treaties, and we are now much closer to the point where there must be international obligations in the environmental field. Not long ago I visited the Council of Europe meetings at Strasbourg, and the members of the consultative assembly of that Council have now reached the stage where they are even contemplating discussions with countries behind the Iron

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Curtain on environmental matters. They have come to realize just what the issue embraces, and since Europe consists of many small countries there must obviously be international standards and controls established.

I think we can assume that in Canada we shall have to enter into international treaties, possibly on a wide scale under the aegis of the United Nations or some other body. I think this country and the United States will probably have to work out some agreements in this regard. But how is the minister or any federal government going to be able to implement international obligations while provincial authorities may be in the position under our constitutional law—though this question has never been tested—of saying no?

I did make this point on Friday but let me repeat it for the benefit of the minister. A great many years ago this country solemnly entered into international obligations with regard to labour standards, some of which fell within the sole jurisdiction of the federal government. These have been implemented. But others have not been implemented, and cannot be implemented until agreement is reached with the provincial legislatures, and this looks unlikely. The United Nations declaration of human rights comes into the same category, and there are a great many other examples to which I could refer.

I am not asking the minister at this stage to set aside the constitution because I know he cannot do so. There are some who say that if the constitution is a difficulty, let us simply override it. I recall a case I had years ago when, as a young lawyer practising in the Peace River country, I defended a man on a charge of stealing a pig. He was not guilty. I never defend clients who are guilty and I should like you to know that. The evidence was bad and it appeared as though the accused was guilty. However, this distinguished judge, Mr. Justice Noel, even after he had found him guilty, sentenced him to a short period of incarceration. The Crown prosecutor said: “How can you do that?” And His Honour said: “It was such a little pig”. I make that comparison because this matter involves a problem the minister must tackle. He must also obtain the support of his colleagues and members of this Parliament.

• (3:40 p.m.)

I do not want to initiate a provincial test, but I feel that in the final analysis there is only one jurisdiction which can deal with these matters, and that is the national jurisdiction. It must deal with these problems in co-operation with provincial legislatures with the greatest possible scope for provincial and regional implementation. We must set as our goal the objective of obtaining complete national control in respect of this important issue. We must decide on a national basis whether this world is going to survive and provide a decent place for human beings to live.

Mr. Skoberg: Mr. Chairman, I recently attended a meeting of a Moose Jaw organization and I am sure the minister will have paid close attention to the number of briefs presented at that meeting. These briefs were directed towards the adoption of national standards.