

*Water Resources*

and learned critic of the arts, economist, social philosopher and philanthropist—was one of the most perspicacious and articulate observers of the human scene. In his preface to the "Crown of Wild Olives" written in 1866 he wrote the following:

Twenty years ago, there was no lovelier piece of lowland scenery in south England, than that immediately bordering on the sources of the Wandle, and including the lower moors of Addington and the villages of Beddington and Carshalton with all their pools and streams. No clearer or divener waters ever sang with constant lips of the hand which "Giveth Rain from Heaven . . ." I have never seen anything so ghastly as the slow stealing of aspects of reckless, indolent animal neglect over the delicate sweetness of that English scene; nor is any blasphemy or impiety, any frantic saying of godless thought more appalling to me, than the insolent defiling of those springs by the human herds that drink of them. Just where the welling of stainless water, trembling and pure like a body of light enters the pool of Carshalton—just in the very rush and murmur of the first spreading currents, the human wretches of the place cast their street and house foulness, heaps of dust and slime, and broken shreds of old metal, and rags of putrid clothes; they have neither the energy to cart it away, nor the decency to dig it into the ground, thus shed into the stream to diffuse what venom of it will float and melt, far away, in all places where God meant those waters to bring joy and health.

These words were not written about Lake Erie or the Ottawa River or St. Lawrence River last week; as indicated, they were written by Ruskin in 1866. But we, of course, have done an even better job than was accomplished by that "human herd" to which Ruskin refers. With all the advantages of industrial and technological progress we have been able to do a real job on our waters. We have accomplished this more perfect desecration in the name of the twin deities of our times, namely, "Profits" and "Standard of Living."

Now I suggest, Mr. Speaker, has come the time of reckoning. The date has arrived when the debt must be paid, the mortgage must be discharged, or foreclosure is at hand—not only foreclosure with respect to the waters themselves, but even the foreclosure of those very twin deities themselves, of profits and standard of living. Because, of course, there will be little of either profits or standard of living unless we do, in fact, reclaim our environment in general, and our waters in particular.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege today to move second reading of the Canada water bill, the most extensive piece of water legislation since Confederation. I begin the debate on this bill with a great sense of urgency, and

with the knowledge that what we say and do here over the next few weeks will affect the lives of all Canadians for decades to come. We must act, and we must act today, to rehabilitate, to protect and to develop our priceless national heritage and our most important single natural resource, our water. The Canada water bill is put forth as the basic policy instrument for all federal water programs, and I think hon. members will agree that we must assure ourselves that by our best efforts here in this house, and in committee, we bring forth the best legislation we can conceive in this complex and often highly technical field.

*[Translation]*

Water is the medium in which life itself was spawned. It is the major constituent of the human body, an essential ingredient of the air we breathe, the principal feature of our weather, the habitat for a myriad varieties of life forms and a major factor in all of man's undertakings.

It is, on the one hand, a source of awesome violence through deluge and flood and, on the other, an object of unparalleled natural beauty and the fount of spiritual rejuvenation for people of all ages.

For millions of years, man, like the more primitive animals before him, has lived along the shoreline of waterways. It is no accident that the great citadels of every civilization are almost without exception located in the vicinity of a major water body. But, as with so many of the bounties of nature we have grown so accustomed to its presence that we fail to give it the attention and respect it deserves.

In time our indulgence, apathy, neglect and abuse have produced a resource that has sunk from being an object of beauty and utility to an unsightly and malodorous witness to the failure of man on his own planet. Far from being a source of inspiration, many of our rivers and lakes are the source of discontent and frustration and at times even a danger to our health and well being.

This is the situation with the once beautiful waterways that surround this very House. Debris, odour, dead fish, and high bacteria count are the normal summertime conditions surrounding many of the country's finest cities and even the very capital of this nation.

The time has come when every government, every industry, and every citizen must act in concert if we are to roll back pollution and thereafter manage our water resources