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well in advance of any project, such as the James Bay project, and that studies should be properly evaluated and assessed before any decision to proceed is made.

We have had an excellent example in British Columbia with the building of the Bennett Dam on the Peace River. Environmental impact studies were never carried out on how the dam would affect the lower reaches of the Peace River and the whole Mackenzie River system. As a result, immense ecological damage has been done to the Mackenzie River system, including the Mackenzie delta, Lake Athabasca, not to mention the ecological damage to the vast area behind the dam itself. The minister will tell us that environmental studies are under way on the James Bay project at this time, but the tragedy lies in the fact that this project started before surveys were made and evaluated. It is crystal clear that the tremendous cost of ecological damage in the James Bay area, the upheaval and dislocation of the way of life of several thousand Indians in the area, were not taken into consideration when the feasibility of the project was being studied. I am certain that if the immense costs of this ecological upheaval, including the loss of some 3,000 to 4,000 square miles of flooded timber, had been included, it would have put the cost of hydro power to be produced in such a high category that the entire plan would have had to be scrapped. It is obvious that the Quebec government has deliberately played down the costs of environmental damage to the general public so as to make the plan more acceptable.

The lack of action by the federal Department of the Environment and the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in the James Bay Project is an indication that the federal government is going to stand on the sidelines and will again allow some very undesirable and unnecessary environmental damage to take place. The department shelters behind the excuse that provincial jurisdiction is involved. When any government gets into trouble, it always tries to hide behind the constitution. This is not good enough in this day and age. Increasing numbers of Canadians are demanding action at all levels to ensure that our environment is not destroyed just because some exploiter wants to make a few fast dollars or some government wants to retain office for a short period by using a major public works scheme as bait for the electors. In any event, there will be much more said on the James Bay project in this session of parliament.

In the time remaining, there are one or two other points I would like to raise. For years our party has been suggesting to the minister that the government should set up an environmental council of Canada which would be completely divorced from politics and based along the lines of the Economic Council of Canada. We feel that an environmental council of this nature would be able to report not only to the government but to the Canadian people and to advise on an environmental policy for this country. It could point out those areas where immediate action should be taken, and it could be critical of the lack of government policy if the council felt that the government were not properly looking after the environment.

I am not sure that the department is receiving sufficient advice from outside the government. We need a council

[Mr. Harding.]

the members of which would sit down with research staff and do a top notch job of advising and setting guidelines, so that all Canadians will be made aware of the direction in which we should be going in this respect. Again, I want to point out that this is a pretty important problem because, after all, the care that we take of the environment and the state in which we leave it after we pass away will determine whether civilization will continue to exist on this globe for any length of time.

There are several other problems that we have drawn to the attention of the government and on which we do not think enough action has been taken. I spoke earlier about the Canada Water Act. The government was going to set up water quality management areas under this act to deal with specific and grave pollution problems. Practically nothing has been done. There are some prime areas in Canada along some of our rivers and in practically every province where this type of action should be taken. There should be no further delay in dealing with these problems.

Then we come to the problem of sewage. Everyone knows that grants are made to municipalities and that a fund is available to municipalities for the setting up of sewage treatment plants, but not enough money is made available and this is one of the prime causes of pollution in a number of major rivers and streams throughout Canada. Let us take a look, for example, at the city of Montreal. Over 300 million gallons of untreated sewage flows into the St. Lawrence every day, which is over 90 per cent of the sewage coming from that great city. If it is a matter of money, I see no reason why there should not be a vast fund of low cost money made available so that municipalities could proceed with sewage treatment projects. I cannot think of a better method of helping to alleviate the unemployment situation in Canada than to make this type of money available. This grant would be repayable over a long period of time so that the municipalities could get on with the treatment of sewage.

Now, I should like to return to British Columbia again and to deal, in the few minutes remaining, with an issue that has been raised in the House. I raised it again last week in a motion, which I hoped would be unanimously supported in this House, on the oil tanker route.

The Chairman: I regret to interrupt the hon. member but the time allotted to him has expired. He may continue with the unanimous consent of the committee.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Harding: Mr. Chairman, I will not abuse the time extension granted by hon. members because I know there are others wanting to speak. May I deal very briefly with the oil tanker route. Since the court of appeal in the United States has stopped the building of the trans-Alaska pipeline for a time, I feel that if this parliament and Canadians generally are really interested in trying to stop this oil tanker route, we should make the U.S. government aware of that fact by passing a motion unanimously in the House that we are opposed to it.

Mr. Davis: This was done.

Mr. Harding: The minister indicates that we moved such a motion in the last parliament. This is a new parliament