

*Water Resources Programs*

It would seem to me that in the absence of national standards, the smaller the groups involved in regulating the elimination of existing pollution and trying to prevent further pollution, the more difficult and complicated the lines of communication between these authorities, the greater the local autonomy in decision-making in respect of pollution control, the more susceptible water basin management boards will be to pressures to neglect their mandate to control pollution in order to facilitate the solution of more immediate, short-run and urgent problems.

I am thinking of the tremendous pressures which might well be brought to bear on water basin management groups, in the absence of national standards, to twist, prevent or relax their standards—especially in underdeveloped areas of the country—in order to attract industry. Let us face it. Pollution control costs money. In many cases it adds to initial capital construction costs. There is a strong temptation for people concerned about the provision of jobs and the economic growth of an underdeveloped area to attempt to compete for industry by slacking off pollution controls.

● (8:10 p.m.)

If members on the government side of the House are tempted to dismiss this as a possibility, it can only be because they do not come from one of the relatively poor regions of this country and have not experienced the sheer desperation of attempting to provide a decent living for people by promoting industrial growth. I come from such an area and have had the privilege of being associated with its government. I have experienced this kind of desperate concern. I have seen men whose judgment I trust really pushed to avoid making decisions that would have immediate or short-run beneficial effects, because in the long-run they might be damaging. All we need do is look at the record of governments in some of our less wealthy areas, in relation to their attempt to promote industrial growth. I intend to refer to these briefly as an example.

The record of the Premier of Newfoundland came under something of a cloud a year or so ago, and so continues, because of the deals he undertook with private corporations to foster industrial growth in Newfoundland, deals which a large body of opinion in Newfoundland consider to be to the ultimate detriment of that province. I am not prepared to comment on that matter in any detail, but

[Mr. Rowland.]

justification of the deals has been so difficult that they have become, to a degree, a political liability for Mr. Smallwood.

In Saskatchewan a large northern pulp and paper complex was permitted to be established by the provincial government. This project came under the same sort of attack. In Manitoba there is the now well-known case of the Churchill Forest Products Industry, which was a horrible deal for the province. None of these deals have anything in particular to do with pollution, but they are not serving the public weal as they should. These projects are evidence of the bad judgement that can result from the panic which develops when one sees the economic growth of one's province at standstill, or when one who is in a position of responsibility for economic growth is panicked into doing something which he otherwise might not have done. Each of the premiers whom I have mentioned is a man with whom I may have a difference of opinion—indeed, a violent difference of opinion—in respect of politics and political philosophy, but each is a man I can admire for the courage he has demonstrated and for courageous actions undertaken. But each felt obliged to make decisions which were questionable in terms of business judgment. They did so because of the sheer necessity to demonstrate to the people of their provinces that economic growth was taking place. They had to demonstrate this in spite of the possible long-term costs.

A similar situation could arise in respect of pollution unless national standards are set with which governments and the water basin management groups are forced to comply. Unless there are national standards, the same sort of panic situation could develop, with the result that long-run policies might be abandoned in order to present short-term evidence of growth. That is what worries me about this legislation. This is the reason I am adding my voice to those who are demanding national standards. There is cut-throat competition for industry among the poorer provinces in particular. There is a desperate fight to obtain industry. In their desperation, the boards in the poorer areas of the country may well sacrifice what this bill is attempting to accomplish in order to obtain industry which is needed.

In his remarks this afternoon the minister said that the hon. member for Kootenay West simply did not listen to expert opinion. In saying that the minister implied that the entire weight of expert opinion was on his side.