

Water Resources Programs

with the subject. I think the problem has been inadequacy of public interest on the one hand, and inadequate enforcement on the other. If this amendment is passed, the responsibility for action will remain with the minister. The minister will be politically responsible to the public and his constituents, if there is a public complaint, to institute an inquiry. The minister will be required to make public reports of his findings. He will be answerable for these reports. He will be responsible for the enforcement of the act.

I cannot conceive of any good reason why this amendment should not be accepted. There is ample precedent in the Combines Investigation Act and in the laws passed by this Parliament in the past. It is a direct effort to involve the Canadian public in this extremely important matter of the enforcement of this act.

Mr. Doug Rowland (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, I rise to reinforce what the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin) has said and to make an additional argument to those he presented. As the hon. member noted, the amendment before us calls for the minister to investigate any complaint of violation of this act submitted to him by any six persons. Upon such application the amendment suggests the minister must investigate the complaint and make public his findings. Should there be definite evidence that an offence under the proposed act has taken place, that is, that some person or organization is carrying on activities which will result in the pollution of our waters in contravention of the provisions of the act, the minister must institute court action against the offenders.

This amendment would incorporate into the Canada Water Act a provision identical to that already included in the Combines Investigation Act. The suggestion is, therefore, not without precedent. To me, the existence of a precedent is not the most important factor. I only mention it because there seems to be on the government benches a sizeable number of members who have a horror of trying anything new. What is important is that we accept this amendment because it provides a highly effective method of policing and enforcing the measures for controlling pollution contained in this act, however inadequate they might be in some particulars.

I do not emphasize too strongly the need for adequate policing and enforcing procedures. Time and again throughout this debate, and in the hearings of the committee which

studied this bill, hon. members and witnesses have drawn our attention to the fact that if existing federal, provincial and municipal legislation designed to control pollution had been properly policed and enforced, we would not today be confronted with a crisis in respect of pollution. We would not be worried to the same extent about the possibility of irreparable harm being done to the ecological balance in this country.

This amendment would allow every citizen of Canada to act as a watchdog, a guardian of the future of this nation. This amendment would provide every citizen of Canada with an effective means of drawing to the attention of the appropriate authorities any action which he considers constitutes a danger to the continued existence of unpolluted and therefore productive, useful, beneficial and aesthetically pleasing bodies of water in Canada. Past experience must have taught us that this kind of vigilance and surveillance is an essential prerequisite for the efficient operation of the mechanisms provided in the bill for the control of pollution.

There is one further, and perhaps an even more socially significant, reason for this House to support the amendment before us. We have seen among the people of this country, just as we have seen in other areas of the world, a growing restlessness. To a large extent this restlessness, and the disorder which it has produced, the social dislocations which, if allowed to continue unchecked, it presages, is the result of individual frustration. The frustration is the result of the individual everywhere and always being confronted by vast seemingly immobile organizations whose method of operation he can never influence. In the face of big government, big business and big unions, the individual citizen of Canada feels that he is virtually incapable of directing his own life or even having some influence over what happens in respect of some of the non-essential details of his life. You cannot even find the proper person to complain to when you have a shirt button torn off in a laundry.

It is this phenomenon which has produced the sense of what sociologists are pleased to call alienation and anomaly in modern industrial states and which in turn, if I may be totally irrelevant, has helped to produce as a compensatory mechanism the numerous movements of national particularism which characterize our world today, even our own nation. I believe it to be important, therefore, that we as legislators ensure that the laws we