

Alleged Lack of Action to Combat Pollution

I suggest to the minister and the government that it simply is not good enough to tell the house they are planning this long range group of studies and examinations and that they will look into the matter. It is essential, not later but now, for the federal government to secure the necessary authority to take action. If the government cannot secure this authority from the provincial governments as a group, then certainly under a series of bilateral agreements it would be competent for the federal governments so to act.

No good reason has yet been advanced by the minister, by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) or by any other member of the treasury benches for not taking this action. This problem did not just arise today or yesterday; it has been with us for a great many years and has been the subject of a great deal of literature as well as speeches both in this house and in the provincial legislatures.

I am not by any means downgrading the importance of many of the federal-provincial conferences that have taken place on other matters, but this much is of the essence: unless an approach is taken that will produce solutions to the problems facing us, with regulations laid down and sanctions applied against those who are concerned, then we are in for a very serious time on this continent.

To bring in the water act is fine. To engage in all these studies the minister has told us about is fine. But I think we have to go a step further. Before this session is over, or certainly during the time when the minister has indicated he intends to issue a white paper with a draft copy of the bill attached, I should like the minister to indicate what is going to be the government's view, and what the government is going to do if it cannot secure from any of the provinces the consent that is required. This is not to suggest by any means that the federal government would have to transgress the constitution; I have indicated that there are ways and means by which a government that has determination and the power to do so can take action.

Use can be made, for example, as the minister is aware, of the peace, order and good government clause. Let us assume that we reach a moment in our social history when the pollution of the St. Lawrence system and the Great Lakes suddenly passes the stage of safety. Surely then, under the peace, order and good government clause the federal government would have every right to intervene. I am not suggesting that that time has come, but with that knowledge, and having in mind the confederation debates that have

[Mr. Baldwin.]

shown beyond doubt what the powers of the federal government are to be, I suggest there is the power to delegate authority. As the minister knows, as a result of the Prince Edward Island case it is now competent for the federal and provincial governments, not to delegate authority to each other, but to delegate authority to an agency which can then take action.

Under those circumstances I urge the government not to wait but to take action. I urge the government to take the steps that can be taken, and which I indicated are available, so that before this problem overwhelms us the government will outline a clear and precise method of dealing with it, as well as the powers the government can exercise if it has the ingenuity and determination to do so.

Mr. Leonard Hopkins (Renfrew North): Mr. Speaker, in view of the time I wonder whether I might call it six o'clock?

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

BOY SCOUTS OF CANADA

REQUEST TO REFER PETITION TO PRIVATE BILLS COMMITTEE

Mr. Gaston Isabelle (Hull): Mr. Speaker, would the house allow me to revert to motions?

[English]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it so agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

[Translation]

Mr. Isabelle moved:

That the petition of the Boy Scouts of Canada—Scouts du Canada—asking for the adoption of a bill to change its name in French to "Les Boys Scouts du Canada" and asking for the incorporation of "L'Association des scouts du Canada" and filed after the time prescribed in Standing Order 90 be referred to the Standing Committee of Miscellaneous Private Bills and Standing Orders with the fourteenth report of the Clerk of Petitions tabled in the house on Monday, June 23, so that the committee may make the recommendations deemed useful.

Motion agreed to.

[English]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It being six o'clock I do now leave the chair until eight o'clock p.m.

At six o'clock the house took recess.