

Water Resources

for the whole country should be defined and enforced. We are concerned that none are set out in the bill, with the exception of the standards to be applied in the water management areas.

This legislation should spell out the federal government's jurisdiction in water policy control. The federal government should be prepared to enforce this jurisdiction, as it has already as evidenced by the Navigable Waters Protection Act, the Fisheries Act and the agreements that we are negotiating to try to obtain some meaningful international control of pollution of the high seas.

Further, we believe that the bill should be strengthened by co-ordinating all federal water efforts in some manner, and we suggest there be a more precise definition of how the total federal approach to the problem can be co-ordinated. In addition, the bill should spell out the terms of federal financial support. We in Parliament should be told exactly what will be the cost-sharing formula. We also believe the bill should indicate that where new local water boards are necessary, a lot of the bureaucratic red tape in connection therewith should be removed. We believe that in this way the bill could be strengthened and made much more meaningful and effective than it is in its present form.

I feel very strongly that before the government concludes the legislative passage of this bill it should convene a national conference among representatives of provincial governments, the Northwest Territories, the Canadian Wildlife Service and other similar organizations, and scientists from our universities and research centres across Canada who are continually preoccupied with the grave problem of pollution.

Surely it would be logical to expect that from such a meeting of minds and expression of opinion as to how to deal with the problem there would evolve, first of all, a recognition of the federal government's responsibility meaningfully to legislate for pollution control for the entire country; and second that the provincial governments for their part would, as they have in many other cases, be prepared to yield whatever jurisdiction they feel they may have. Only in this way do we feel that the government will be able to bring in meaningful legislation which would be able to cope in the coming decade with this new challenge of pollution which poses a threat not only to our environment but to the environment of the entire world.

If, in fact, the government is sincere in its intentions, this bill is a misrepresentation of those intentions. We strongly believe that the minister should reconsider the bill and should be prepared to do so when it gets to the committee. The minister should be prepared to call witnesses from across Canada, such as learned scientists, scholars and wildlife experts, who would present papers to the committee. The government, as I say, for its part should be prepared to enter into discussions with these groups before finally concluding the legislative passage of the bill. In its present form this bill, in my submission, is not only a disappointment to this House, but will prove to be a disappointment to the entire country.

● (8:20 p.m.)

Mr. Ray Perrault (Burnaby-Seymour): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that even the issue of pollution must be converted into a political football by some of the opponents of this government. If ever an issue existed which confronts Canadians it is the issue of pollution, which should be met on a non-partisan basis. Beyond that, we must not only meet it nationally on a non-partisan basis but we have reached the point in our human existence on planet earth where we have to meet it on a non-political, non-ideological and international basis.

The statement is made that there has been federal failure, yet members of this government have explored the situation and initiated action designed to overcome some of the very real constitutional problems inherent in the pollution problem. I look back on the years when our friends to the left had the responsibility of governing this country and call to mind all the excuses that were cited for their inability to fight pollution in Canada.

An hon. Member: Two wrongs don't make a right.

Mr. Perrault: The hon. member admits there was something wrong with the preceding government and many Canadians thought the same way. One of the reasons this government was elected to power was that the Canadian people were concerned about the do-nothing, lack-lustre policy with respect to pollution which was a feature of that preceding régime. The last thing I want to do is become political tonight.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!