

Environmental Affairs

Mr. Caccia: You can say that seriously, can you?

Mr. Gurbin:—which was sadly lacking in former Governments in which the Hon. Member participated.

I conclude, regrettably, by adding one more small comment. The only thing I can find that was accomplished during the period of time that the Hon. Member had responsibility for the environment was a regulation which came into effect three years after it was first gazetted. It, in fact, did precious little by way of real action to enhance and improve the environment of Canada. That is a regrettable record for anyone.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague, the Member Hon. for Davenport (Mr. Caccia), for bringing this issue on to the floor of the House of Commons. I listened with interest to the report of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Gurbin) on the action taken by the Government to deal with toxic chemicals and wastes.

I am one of many Parliamentarians who are very proud of Environment Canada, and particularly its officials with their expertise and outstanding talents and abilities. We are proud of the contributions they make and the way in which they call a spade a spade. Many of the scientists and other people in Environment Canada call it right on. I want to give them credit for that. A certain amount of confusion enters my mind due to the comments of the Parliamentary Secretary. He was expounding on all of the wonderful things the federal Government is doing to meet the concerns of the toxic chemical and toxic waste emergency which is developing.

I have in my hand Environment Canada's report card on what Canada is doing in terms of environmental programs. This report card was issued only a few days ago. It breaks down the various sections of the environment: acid rain, toxic waste, water quality, wildlife, forest conservation and so on. It rates each one of these areas in terms of government action. Just for clarification, this is Environment Canada's evaluation of the state of affairs of certain environmental areas of the country.

After having listened to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, I am perplexed when I look at this because Environment Canada gives Canada an "F" for failure on toxic waste. It says that there are poor disposal practices and that urgent action—not studies—is required to identify health risks, set standards, and implement control measures. This is now emerging as Canada's number one environmental problem. Environment Canada gives its Government an "F" for what it has done and what it is doing.

Mr. McDermid: That reflects on the previous Minister, too.

Mr. Riis: This is dated May, 1986. We are perhaps talking about past administrations, but we are certainly talking about the present administration which has been in place for nearly two years. It should be introducing all sorts of measures. People might ask what sorts of action we could take. I would

like to suggest a few which my colleague, the Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Birds Hill (Mr. Blaikie), has articulated in this House on a number of occasions and in letters to the Minister of the Environment. He has suggested, for example, passage of the Canada Safe Drinking Water Act. We have a lot of drinking water. Why not have an Act which provides for the taking of safe measures? That includes support for the upgrading of waste water treatment facilities.

I was an alderman for many years in the City of Kamloops. I remember applying through CMHC for funds from the federal Government to help construct facilities to treat sewage to help improve the quality of drinking water. I can recall that literally hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars were spent by the federal Government to assist municipalities to develop that type of infrastructure. There is no longer any money available to help the hard-pressed municipalities of Canada to upgrade the treatment of their water.

Mr. Caccia: Are you listening, Gurbin?

Mr. Riis: The Member for Winnipeg—Birds Hill suggested the passage of an environmental bill of rights. I believe that Canadians can expect certain rights with regard to the quality of the environment. There is a toxic nightmare beginning to occur in this country as a result of inaction by the Government as the build up of toxic chemicals and toxic waste takes on deadly proportions.

My friend from Winnipeg—Birds Hill suggested the implementation of the recommendations of the Law Reform Commission calling for stiffer penalties for polluters. He suggests the speedy introduction of tough amendments to the Environmental Contaminants Act. He suggests the establishment of a super fund for the complete removal and destruction of toxic wastes stored in Canadian dump sites. Note the words "complete removal" rather than, as this Minister is suggesting, a slow bleeding off over the years of a limited number of toxic chemicals.

The Member goes on to suggest increased Government funding for toxicology research, including the complete restoration of programs such as the Herring Gull Egg Program and the Guelph Toxicology Research Centre which were cancelled a year ago. He also suggests increased Government funding for upgrading municipal water treatment facilities and, of course, waste water treatment facilities as well.

These are positive suggestions from members of the Opposition. These are things that the Government could act on. What has the Government done? Adjacent to my own constituency in Lone Butte, British Columbia, Bradbury Industries plans to build a plant to produce Pentachlorophenol and Tetrachlorophenol, otherwise known as PCP and TTCP, both of which contain dioxins. The Bradbury plant poses a very serious health risk to the local population and those who will ultimately be using those chemicals.