

*Fisheries Act*

make this statement on the basis of the wording of clause 9 on page 11 which states that a clause of the bill cannot take effect until the Canada Water Act has received Royal Assent.

The members of the Official Opposition have examined this bill and it is not our intention to oppose it. But there are some clauses with which we are concerned. I listened carefully to the minister, and I concur with much that he has said. The first part of the bill deals strictly with pollution control and no one could, therefore, reasonably quarrel with its intent.

In recent weeks there has been mounting evidence concerning the dreadful pollution of Canadian waters and the threat this pollution presents to our environment. Mercury poisoning has been reported in lakes in Ontario, Saskatchewan and Manitoba and it would be no surprise to find that all rivers and lakes adjacent to certain chemical plants are similarly polluted. Certainly, the situation which we know exists in Lake St. Clair and the St. Clair River now, where commercial and sports fishing have been banned for an indefinite period—since analysis of Lake St. Clair pickerel showed concentrations of mercury far beyond those considered safe for human consumption—cannot be ignored.

The first alarm about the dangers of mercury poisoning was raised in Japan where, in 1953, some 41 people died of nervous disorders which were ultimately traced to mercury poisoning. It was noted that their diet included large quantities of shellfish caught in a bay contaminated by effluent from a plastics plant. In Canada, attention has only recently be drawn to the danger of mercury as a pollutant although, obviously, mercury has been in use for along time. Besides being used in thermometers, mercury is principally used in chlor-alkali plants as an electrolytic catalyst in the manufacture of chlorine and caustic soda. It also plays a major role in the plastics industry, as well as in the pulp and paper industry, and in the making of fungicides. It gets into our rivers and lakes as part of the effluent from industrial plants and, to a lesser degree, from the agricultural run-off.

Since many of our industries have been using mercury for long periods of time, it is now obvious that the management of these plants have been aware of the polluting effect of their operations. But they have not taken any steps to correct the situation. Now, demands not only local but national and international in scope are being made for

[Mr. Crouse.]

greater efforts to clean up our polluted waters. If the response is to be effective, much more research will be required by industry as well as by our federal and provincial authorities and, on the Great Lakes, by our American friends who also have a vital concern over improving the quality of water in the area.

All of us have recently been made aware of this government's attitude toward international conferences. But if we are to bring about effective control of the pollution in the Great Lakes, I believe the federal government should immediately request a conference between the provincial authorities concerned and the governors of the eight states bordering the lakes. This conference should take place either in Washington or in Ottawa so that a co-operative effort may be made between Canada and the United States—a joint effort between our two nations—to get this problem under control. It makes little sense for Canada to try to control pollution of the Great Lakes unless our neighbours to the south are implementing similar procedures to deal with pollution by their own industries and the large cities situated on the United States side of the border adjacent to the Lakes.

As I said before, we are in agreement with the intent of this bill. Unfortunately, there are too many loopholes left open in this legislation. This becomes evident if one looks at the exemption clauses. These exemptions are clearly areas in which the government can exercise control, and there is scarcely any need to direct attention to the abuse which this arrangement makes possible. On the very first page of the bill we read in clause 3(1) that Section 33 (2) of the Fisheries Act is repealed and the following substituted:

● (3:40 p.m.)

(2) Subject to subsection (4), no person shall deposit or permit the deposit of waste of any type in any water frequented by fish or in any places under any conditions where such waste or any other waste that results from the deposit of such waste may enter any such water.

Certainly this is desirable, but what are the words of the section in the Fisheries Act that is being deleted? This subsection is printed in the bill and reads as follows:

(2) No person shall cause or knowingly permit to pass into, or put or knowingly permit to be put, lime, chemical substances or drugs, poisonous matter, dead or decaying fish, or remnants thereof, mill rubbish or sawdust or any other deleterious substance or thing, whether the same is of a like character to the substances named in this section