

Canadian Pollution Awareness Week

Mr. Comeau: That includes the hon. member for Northwest Territories (Mr. Orange).

Mr. Harding: Mr. Speaker, this is just one more example of the need for full co-operation among all groups in this field. Without doubt, before this session of Parliament ends we shall have national standards or we shall see them introduced. The minister tells us they are being drafted. Who was right? We were right and the government was wrong. The government should have been with us in the fight for national standards six or seven months ago.

An hon. Member: Don't kill the bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The Chair asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Mahoney) to observe and come within the terms of relevancy. I suggest to the hon. member who now has the floor that his remarks are somewhat outside the scope of the bill that the House is considering.

Mr. Harding: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The point I have been trying to make is this: We should be aware at all times of the need for pollution control. I think hon. members in the government party were not very much aware of it when the proposition was before the House. There is one more point I wish to make. We need to be aware of pollution problems. Any suggestion that we can allow factories to pollute our waterways if they pay effluent fees is utter nonsense. Again, we fought about this matter six or seven months ago. Hon. members of the House must be aware of problems of this type.

Although one or two more members wish to speak, I should very much like to hear the sponsor of the bill winding up the debate. We should allow him a few minutes to explain his reasons for introducing the bill. Let him make the speech he prepared in connection with his bill. I shall say no more. Although I have been somewhat critical of past actions, Mr. Speaker, I make it crystal clear that I endorse the principle of the bill. I shall vote for the bill and try to push it through the committee when it is referred to it.

• (4:40 p.m.)

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to join in the debate on this bill.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Foster: I am glad to have such wonderful applause, especially from the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath). He is a very close friend and I am glad he is supporting the bill. Sometimes we do not receive the kind of support we should receive from the opposition when dealing with good legislation such as is placed before the House by the hon. member for Burnaby-Richmond-Delta (Mr. Goode). This bill would proclaim a Canadian national pollution awareness week. The idea is to make Canadians more aware of the problem of pollution in order that future generations shall join in undertaking special projects during that week. They would then, throughout the year, practice the objectives and ideals established during that week.

[Mr. Harding.]

The hon. member who preceded me talked about national water standards. I spent many weeks on the resources committee which drafted the Canada Water Act. I thought it was best to have the highest standard that could be achieved in any water basin or river system, rather than establish from the centre levels of water quality throughout the country. Although "national standards" is a nice catch-phrase, it is really a façade. National standards would be very difficult to work out in practice. People would contravene the regulations because it would be impossible to have one standard throughout the country.

Last week the joint constitutional committee of the Senate and House of Commons travelled across Canada. Briefs were presented throughout British Columbia and the lower part of Alberta. These briefs dealt more with pollution control than any other topic. Many people felt this should be a constitutional responsibility of the government and not in the area of divided jurisdiction, which is the case at present. As we listened to the briefs presented, I became painfully aware that the people of western Canada are unaware of the Canada Water Act. They are not aware of the very ingenious way in which it could be used in our present situation. The federal and provincial governments can delegate control of pollution of our environment, waters and river basins to water management agencies. One of the first duties of Parliament and agencies charged with pollution should be to make people aware that there is a Canada Water Act. This should be done during national pollution awareness week. Canadians can demand that the federal and provincial governments establish water management agencies for each river system, and in this way pollution could be controlled.

It is important that we have local participation. This is the value of local, water management agencies. People who live near a river basin can take an active part in this committee. They are the ones concerned with pollution in the area. I would like to see four water management agencies established in the province of Ontario, one for the Ottawa river, one for the two lower lakes—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order please. The Chair suggested to the hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr. Harding), and he agreed, that the bill under debate is very narrow in scope. We are not considering the Canada Water Act which was passed by Parliament some months ago. I ask hon. members to confine their remarks to the bill.

Mr. Foster: Mr. Speaker, I was trying to round out what a national pollution awareness week could do. It could make people in the province of Ontario aware of the need to establish water management agencies throughout the province. I suggest that there should be one agency for the Ottawa River which would involve the provinces of Ontario and Quebec and the federal government. There should be one for the two lower lakes, sometimes called the dirty lakes—Lake Erie and Lake Ontario. There should also be an agency for Lake Superior and Lake Huron, which are less polluted and one for the rivers flowing into James Bay and Hudson Bay.