

Proposed Committee on Pollution

I am sure I will be excused if I refer especially to the situation in my own province of New Brunswick, because in that province pollution is a most difficult problem to solve. Questions of jurisdiction are involved. In this regard I draw to the attention of the house and the sponsor of this motion that New Brunswick has two rivers, the Saint John and the St. Croix, which may both be considered international rivers. Since they are international rivers they fall within the ambit of the international joint commission. As it is a body composed of representatives two countries instead of one, jurisdictional difficulties are just about doubled.

The Saint John river flows along the border of the state of Maine and New Brunswick, entering our province at the city of Edmundston. At this point the river is an international one since it is the boundary between New Brunswick and the state of Maine. About 50 miles farther on the river becomes entirely a New Brunswick river, though farther back toward its source it is entirely within the state of Maine.

The river flows through New Brunswick parallel with the boundary for about 100 miles. Small streams which spring from the state of Maine flow into the Saint John river, and the pollution of the Saint John river, generally speaking, comes from plants situated in the state of Maine. This pollution flows into a great many of these small streams that join the Saint John river and consists partly of ordinary sewage from towns and partly of waste from processing plants of one kind or another.

I mention this so as to bring to the attention of the house the great jurisdictional difficulties that exist here, though I do not suggest these difficulties are entirely confined to our particular situation. However, Canada does have a 4,000 mile boundary with the United States, a good part of which is water.

Before terminating my remarks I think I should refer to the situation that affects the Saint Croix which is almost entirely an international river. We are trying to preserve the salmon fishery of the river, but since several towns are situated on both sides of the border along the river the improvement and restoration of the salmon fishery are most difficult. So many jurisdictional problems are involved.

The people of the town of St. Stephen on the New Brunswick side of the river are most anxious to bring about this improvement because the pollution at that point is getting to be scandalous. A pulp mill is situated

upriver about 15 miles and pumps its effluent into the river. Immediately across the river on the Maine side is the town of Galais. A little farther upriver is Milltown on the New Brunswick side. These towns collectively have a population of something like 15,000 to 20,000 people, half of the people residing in the state of Maine and half in New Brunswick, and they are concentrated in this small area.

Although this makes a solution difficult to find, it does not mean that nothing should be done. I submit that it is the function of governments to pay attention to problems such as this. However, since the federal government and the provincial administration must first get together, and then the municipal administrations and the two countries themselves must be brought into the discussions, one can readily see that the task is far from easy.

Last summer a processing plant so polluted one of the rivers in the county of Carleton that people driving their automobiles along the road running parallel to the river had to wind up their windows to shut out the terrible odour. The people of the little town of Centreville did the best they could to get some action about this from the authorities in the state of Maine since the plant was on the U.S. side, but without result. Therefore they decided to take the law into their own hands and built a dam across the river between New Brunswick and Maine. A bulldozer was donated to them; they built a dam, dammed up the water and shoved it back into Maine. It was only a few weeks before relief was afforded to people of the town. They went in and knocked down the dam. I was one of a fairly large group of people, some 800 or 1,000, who erected a monument to the people who built the dam. It is still there but there are no names on it. I submit it is a symbol of the frustration people feel in connection with pollution.

• (5:20 p.m.)

Certainly pollution has never received adequate attention by governments at any level. The hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich (Mr. Anderson) deserves to be commended for bringing the matter to the attention of the house. Since he has brought it forward perhaps some of our governments may react to his proposals and do something to benefit those parts of the country suffering from pollution.

Mr. Randolph Harding (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, may I say a few words on this