

Clean Air Act

quality, if the tolerances are exceeded what will we do about it unless we reach international agreement? And if we have an international agreement, shall we impose our standards on the United States, for example? Will we work out mutual agreements with the provinces?

In view of these factors, I hope this House realizes that we have a vital bill in front of us; that we have 10 "countries" in this great nation of Canada, each of which must be considered. Either hon. members agree that this should be strictly a federal matter and they should stop yacking about the provinces all the time, which they are supposed to represent, or they admit they know full well that the provinces have rights and that the federal government cannot impose itself, unilaterally if you like, upon the provinces in environmental matters.

I know of no other bill that strikes at the lives, the livelihoods and the social welfare of the people of Canada as much as the bills we have before us, such as the organization bill and Bill C-224. So, Mr. Speaker, in closing—and, unlike the previous speaker, I intend to close only twice instead of four times—I hope that immediately we call the question and get the bill into committee where hon. members can provide a useful service. I admit their speeches in committee do not get back home as readily as they do from this chamber, but the importance of this bill is already back home. I think we should accept that, and I hope we will get this bill into committee as soon as possible.

Mr. G. H. Aiken (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Mr. Speaker, I should like to have accepted the invitation of the hon. member for Fraser Valley East (Mr. Pringle) to close the debate immediately following his speech, but there are a few things I want to add to what has been said, though certainly I am not going to take very long. In the first place, I agree entirely with the objectives of this bill in controlling air pollution throughout Canada. The objectives are desirable and the problem is urgent. Therefore, I think that we should get the bill into committee as quickly as possible.

I should like to point out that in my opinion the bill winds its way through the jurisdictional jungle of the Canadian constitution in masterly fashion, but it fails to cut through the maze in a forthright manner or as a result of having made advance arrangements with the provinces. This was the case with, and also the weakness of, the Canada Water Act. There is one exception to this general weakness and that is the section of the bill that relates to fuels, with which I will deal later, which I think does deal with the problem forthrightly.

Without provincial concurrence and joint provincial legislation, I think this bill is a futile gesture, such as was the case with the Canada Water Act. A clean air bill has been promised for two years. I am not going to lay the blame for the delay on the present minister, because it was not he who made the promise. A clean air bill was promised by the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro) and it appeared to me that the delay in getting it before Parliament was caused by the government trying to make a co-operative effort with the provinces. So the situation confronting the government on

this bill is not as difficult as it was when the government introduced the Canada Water Act. I had hoped that the provinces would be consulted so that this bill could avoid the jurisdictional problems experienced with the Canada Water Act. Unfortunately, as far as I can gather from the speech of the minister today, it was only three or four weeks ago, after the bill had been drafted and was ready for introduction, that the minister toured the provinces to acquaint them with its terms. It is not enough to have the provinces not objecting and it is not enough to have them invited or consulted because, as in respect of the Canada Water Act, we need concurrent legislation.

• (3:20 p.m.)

There is provision in this bill for the government to join with the provinces in making arrangements and contracts, but the provinces cannot carry out their part of such an agreement unless they have concurrent legislation. The provincial governments, like the government of Canada, cannot act on their own without the authority of their legislatures. In other words, merely because we have this legislation at the federal level does not mean that provincial governments will be able to enter into agreements on their own. We do not have concurrent legislation and we do not have any indication that it will be forthcoming. To the credit of the minister I should say he has in the past few weeks tried to save the day by consulting the provinces. He has obtained an agreement and co-operation, but as good as his intentions might be, it is really not co-operation we need—we need legislative authority. This is still lacking, and it is fundamental.

Let me now turn to the matter of policy on national standards of air quality. The minister stated today that this bill authorizes such national standards. It is my belief that it does not. I do not want to split hairs about it, but we have the same problem we had with the Canada Water Act. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Greene) kept telling us in one breath that he could not involve himself with national water standards because he did not have the authority, and in the next breath he told us they existed. Neither of these statements was accurate, and the result is that we now have the Canada Water Act which is an ineffective piece of legislation. As far as getting national air quality standards is concerned, this bill takes four runs at the problem. It takes a run at it in clause 4, where it says that this provision will apply where air quality objectives—I stress the word "objectives"—are defined and authorized. That is fine. We have objectives, but that does not say we will ever reach them.

The bill takes another run at this in clause 7 where it refers to national emission standards and guidelines; I stress the word "emission" because this does not relate to the quality of air but to the quality of emission into the air in various places. This clause is limited to cases where emissions constitute a significant danger to health or which are likely to contravene our international obligations. Let me point out the word "significant". I imagine that is there to give the federal government, or Parliament, statutory authority. It refers to a significant danger to health as being the criterion rather than a