

Water Resources

Losses through shore erosion have today reached a point where they can no longer be considered the responsibility of the individual person whose land is affected, but rather, because of the federal government's control of navigable waters, a problem to be considered jointly by the dominion and provincial governments and the municipality concerned. This committee therefore recommends that:

The dominion, provincial and municipal governments should recognize the public responsibility for assistance in lakeshore erosion prevention.

We in this group say amen to those conclusions. No effective action has been taken in any country until a governing body with sufficient influence and financial resources has taken the lead to do something about the erosion situation. This is a long-term problem in Canada, an increasing problem; and once again I say that we in this group regret very much that there is no provision in the bill for at least a start on the part of the government on this most important problem, a very serious one to Canadians in various parts of Canada.

It is a long-time problem, but no action has been taken to date. It is time something was done. If the minister does not see fit to introduce an amendment to the bill that would remedy the situation, we would urge his department to give consideration to the problem as it exists in Canada from the Atlantic to the Pacific, with a view to taking steps to improve the situation in the very near future.

Mr. J. A. Charlton (Brant-Wentworth): Mr. Speaker, it is not my intention to discuss this bill at length this afternoon. Let me say briefly that, in principle, this party is in agreement.

Those of us who live along the Grand river appreciate the assistance given by this government and by the provincial government in the building of the Shand dam and the Luther dam; and we feel now that the Glen Allan dam on the Conestogo will improve the flood situation considerably in the Grand river valley.

In my view this bill has more to do with flood control than with water conservation. I had hoped it might include more in respect of water conservation, but it is to be noted that it does make reference to reforestation. However, there is much more to water conservation than simply the building of dams and a program of reforestation.

We already have on the statute books the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act, under the supervision of the Department of Agriculture. I feel that the large number of officials and engineers in that department might have dealt effectively with this legislation, as there would seem to be a good deal of duplication.

Many P.F.R.A. employees are connected with this kind of work in the west, and I am convinced that they could have made themselves responsible for it across the whole nation. I question therefore the wisdom of not placing this bill under that department. As I said earlier, we accept the principle of the bill, although we had hoped that it would have contained further provisions for water and soil conservation. I have no further comment to make at the moment. Any questions I may have may better be asked at a later time.

Mr. Solon E. Low (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I had not intended speaking at length in this debate, but as one who has been interested for years in conservation I believe I should take this opportunity to say a word in commendation of what the Minister of Resources and Development (Mr. Winters) has done in bringing this bill before the house.

Although he is one of the younger members of the government, I wish to congratulate him upon his vision and foresight, and upon his ability to gather from his observations and studies the importance of things people in Canada are thinking, and feeling should be done, and especially at this time I would commend him for bringing a bill of this kind before the house with a view to making statutory some of the arrangements that had been made hitherto only by agreement between the federal and provincial governments. Let me commend him and congratulate him warmly and sincerely for what he is doing.

We may not agree that the bill is everything we would want, but I am always happy to see a start made. I do not look upon this start as encompassing the whole scope of what will be encompassed eventually in legislation of this kind. Doubtless changes will be made, and in all likelihood as the years and sessions go by members will bring to the minister's attention changes that should be made in the act to enlarge its scope.

I am happy that, through the action he is taking today, the minister is giving leadership in the field of conservation. That is important. The last time I spoke on this subject I believe I said leadership ought to come from a senior government in Canada. That leadership is now coming from the point from which it should come, and this gives me considerable satisfaction.

I do not look upon this legislation as being exclusively Social Credit legislation in any respect; nor do I think the hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr. Herridge) has any logical basis for saying that it is C.C.F.