

Water Resources Programs

Mr. McCleave: Mr. Speaker, may I rise on a point of order? I have to follow the minister in this debate, but I do not want to follow him all over the geographical water resources of Canada. I think he should confine his remarks to the amendments that appear on page 5 of today's Routine Proceedings and Orders of the Day. That is the area we are supposed to be debating.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have been reviewing the two amendments before us, and I had the impression the minister was dealing with water quality standards, or at least he was a moment ago. I am sure the minister appreciates the procedural nicety that his remarks should be confined as much as possible to the two amendments. Having said that, I must also acknowledge that the Chair was being fairly lenient with hon. members who have spoken, not only on these amendments but on others, and I am trying to exercise the same degree of discretion with regard to the minister. I hope hon. members will bear with me in the exercise of this discretion.

• (4:10 p.m.)

Mr. Greene: Mr. Speaker, with respect, the amendments deal with the so-called single standard—

Mr. Aiken: There is no such thing as a single standard.

Mr. Greene: —of which the members opposite are so enamoured.

Mr. Aiken: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. The minister is deliberately misleading the House as to the position of the opposition parties.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Aiken: There has never been a discussion of a single or uniform standard for water quality in the committee or here in the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have a little difficulty interpreting this. It does seem to me to be a matter of debate. I understand the hon. member's point of view. I heard him develop it. It seems to me that the point of order raised is a matter of dispute between the member and the minister.

Mr. Aiken: It is not a matter of dispute as far as I am concerned, and I think I am speaking for the members of the opposition. We have never proposed a single standard or a uniform standard. That is not what is

[Mr. Greene.]

included in this amendment, and that is why the minister is making it difficult to debate the subject because he is not talking about the amendment at all.

Mr. Greene: Mr. Speaker, I don't blame the members for wanting to get off the hook on the single standard, or the unilateral standard, or whatever you want to call it, because there may be some of them who may have referred to something beyond their own innate genius with respect to what they consider should be anti-pollution control in Canada. If one looks beyond the inherent wisdom of the members themselves, one will find that every scientific authority comes to the conclusion that water can and should only be managed on a water basin approach, which is exactly the genius of the bill itself. Of course, the members may feel that by some divine gift they know more than the scientists do. But on this question of standards set from above by Ottawa, uniform standards across Canada or whatever you wish to call it, I have yet to hear one single member quote one single authority for that strange proposition, except possibly their own party platforms. I do not think that in the scientific field either the party platform of the Conservative party or of the NDP is held in very high esteem.

The hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka (Mr. Aiken) fails to see, so he says, the relevancy of questions of co-ordination to the propositions contained in Motions Nos. 7 and 14, which allude to a standard set for all of Canada, whatever you may want to call it, a single standard, a standard set by the Ottawa Government, or whatever other nomenclature hon. members prefer to give it. What has been made quite manifest during the debate, and what I think the country now appreciates, is the fact that there will not be competition between the various water quality management areas, as alleged by the hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr. Harding). That is assured by the very co-ordinating process which takes place under the federal aegis. As I think I have said often, and probably ad nauseum to most but those in the House who do not wish the bill to go through quickly, the co-ordination process which will assure uniformity of standards is the fact that on each water basin management agency there will be federal representation.

The federal representation will be co-ordinated as between the federal departments by the interdepartmental committee structure.