

Water Resources

Mr. Baldwin: I will be available tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker: I thank hon. members for the advice given me. I may say that at first blush, and even without the benefit of the advice of the President of the Privy Council, I have serious doubts about the point raised by the hon. member for Peace River. It seems to me that there may be a misapprehension as to what is sought by this bill. Without going into the matter in great detail or at length, may I say that a recommendation was obtained from the Governor General, as is indicated in the bill itself. It covers apparently those aspects of the bill where a charge on the treasury is sought. My understanding of both the constitutional requirement and the Standing Orders and procedures of the House is that this is required only when a charge is made on the treasury. The particular aspects of the bill to which the hon. member referred do not claim to impose a tax or a charge on the treasury; they seek to indicate another way whereby money can be raised. In this sense, perhaps the prior recommendation of the Governor General was not required at all.

As I said, this is what comes to mind at first blush. It may be that the bill should be understood in this way. I feel that there is more than a technicality involved but, in any event, in view of the fact that there is agreement between hon. members, we should proceed with the debate on this bill. I will have an opportunity to look into the matter later this afternoon and perhaps bring down a ruling later on in the day. For the moment, the discussion on the bill will be allowed to proceed.

Hon. J. J. Greene (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, since this is probably the first opportunity I have had to do so, I should like to thank hon. members opposite for their great courtesy and consideration to me, personally, during some portions of the past year which in some ways has been the winter of my personal discontent. I think there is a spirit of consideration, courtesy, and kindness in this House that sometimes is not appreciated by those who are not of this House, irrespective of how often or how completely they may observe its doings. Certainly, the fact that hon. members felt that I was not ready for the fray gave to them an opportunity to show this kindness and consideration. For this I thank them very deeply. I thank in particular the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka (Mr. Aiken) who is the official opposition spokesman for the particular portfolio which I have the honour to

[Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale).]

hold. The hon. member held his guns in some way, having shared some of the same troubles—the only difference being that he displayed much more good sense than I did, because at least he had the good sense only to be kicked by the horse once while I had to have two of the same before I learned any lesson at all.

As all hon. members of this House, I am here because I feel there is some purpose that I want to fulfil in being here. And certainly one of the reasons for which I am very happy to be back, and for which I was anxious to come back, is that I could play some small part in the fulfilment of the great need that exists in our country to improve the quality of our environment, of our waters, and to enable the passage of this Canada water bill, which I think will be a considerable step in that direction.

I look upon this measure as a great test of the ability of our instruments of government and legislation in Canada to deal with the real problems that affect human beings in this so-called post-industrial era. It was Carlyle who said that “the history of the world is but the biography of great men”. In our reading of history to date, Carlyle’s cynicism would probably be substantiated. The test of the todays and the tomorrows, I suggest, is whether or not we have moved beyond this stage of human development; whether ordinary men, such as most of us are, can move the instruments of State to meet the human problems which affect the quality of life, and will make this planet a fit, gracious and worthy place for the family of man. The quality of our environment, and our ability to control its use for mankind, is one of the great tests of the times on this issue of the adaptability of our instruments of government to improve the quality of life.

● (3:30 p.m.)

We are far from the first to see the problem, or we are certainly not the first to act upon it, though clearly not enough has been done. As early as 1876 a forward looking Tory government—and there were forward looking Tory governments in those days—by an Act of the government of prime minister Disraeli in the United Kingdom passed the Rivers Pollution Act. So, even that early the problem was seen and action was taken.

As early as 1866, John Ruskin, who has sometimes been hailed as “the most complete human being since Da Vinci”—be that as it may, there is no doubt but that this sensitive