

Water Resources Programs

Mr. Speaker: Hon. members seem to suggest that perhaps we would have too many questions of privilege. I have not suggested that, but I would suggest to the hon. member that he may have a grievance. He does not have a point of order or a question of privilege, and I really cannot agree that he should pursue the matter.

Mr. Comeau: I suggest to Your Honour that the Minister of Finance on May 19 was misleading the House, and this is where my question of privilege arises. If I might be permitted to continue—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot allow the hon. member to continue. This is not a question of privilege. In any event, if the matter arose before, according to the rules, which he knows very well, the hon. member should have given written notice. It is no excuse for a member to say that a matter has just been brought to his attention. The matter could have been brought to his attention beforehand and he should have followed the rules which require that a question of privilege be raised in the usual way by giving written notice to the Chair. The hon. member has not done this. Therefore he cannot at this time raise a question of privilege which I have ruled is not a question of privilege.

Mr. Comeau: On a point of order, I tried to get the attention of the Chair to ask a question of the Minister of National Revenue today which might have cleared up the matter. This is why I was waiting for an opportunity.

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. member wants to ask a question he can ask it tomorrow or at some other time. But again this is further evidence that he does not have a question of privilege. Orders of the day.

• (3:00 p.m.)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

WATER RESOURCES

PROVISION FOR MANAGEMENT INCLUDING RESEARCH AND PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAMS

The House resumed, from Tuesday, June 2, consideration of Bill C-144, to provide for the management of the water resources of Canada including research and the planning and implementation of programs relating to the conservation, development and utilization

[Mr. Monteith.]

of water resources, as reported (with amendments) from the Standing Committee on National Resources and Public Works.

Mr. Randolph Harding (Kootenay West) moved:

That Bill C-144, to provide for the management of the water resources of Canada including research and the planning and implementation of programs relating to the conservation, development and utilization of water resources be amended by adding thereto, immediately following clause 31 on page 26, the following section:

"32. If any six persons make a complaint to the Minister of an offence under this act, the Minister shall investigate the complaint and make public his findings, and if there is prima facie evidence of an offence under this Act, the Minister shall institute court action."

and by renumbering subsequent clauses accordingly.

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr. Harding) has asked me to speak to the amendment in his name. The amendment is self explanatory. It provides for adding to the bill a new section which would provide for a minimum of six members of the general public who could institute a ministerial inquiry into any alleged offence under the act. It provides for publication of the minister's findings. It also provides for institution by the minister of proceedings in the courts if a prima facie case is made out.

The amendment is modeled on similar provisions in the Combines Investigation Act. Its purpose is to involve the public in the policing and enforcing of the act and in protecting Canadian waters against pollution. Most members of this House, certainly those who follow this subject, are aware of the fact that there is a tremendous public interest in this question of pollution. There is a new conscientiousness about our environment, particularly our waters being polluted, destroyed, made worse than useless in so far as any satisfactory way of life for our people is concerned. The public are interested. They want to know what they can do about this problem. The amendment introduced by my colleague provides part of the answer. It involves participation of the public and it involves their concern regarding pollution. I venture to suggest that if the public become disinterested, apathy and indifference will return. The main force behind the enforcement of this act will no longer exist.

I am convinced that the secret of dealing with pollution is adequate enforcement. I do not believe that in the past the problem has been inadequacy of the laws available to deal