

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

pollution, which I introduced in this house and which was given first reading on May 11, 1967, and also Bill No. C-171, to amend the Criminal Code with respect to air and water pollution, introduced by the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce (Mr. Allmand) on October 25, 1967.

I hope I do not have to convince anyone in this house that air pollution is a major national problem which requires urgent attention by all levels of government. Evidence is mounting, especially from the industrialized centres of the country such as Toronto and Montreal, that dangerous levels of air pollutants have already appeared on several days. Medical authorities have also stated that there is a distinct relation between atmospheric pollution and certain respiratory diseases. We are also told by certain medical authorities that living in polluted downtown urban areas, or driving more than 12,000 miles in similar downtown areas, increases considerably the risk of lung cancer in cigarette smokers.

In Canada some legislation for the control of air pollution has already been enacted in five provinces but there is a wide variation in the legislation of those provinces dealing with air pollution. To date no authority has been set up to deal with interprovincial air pollution problems.

Many industrialized countries have a clean air act and certain measures to enforce the legislation controlling air pollution. I believe that we in Canada must act more vigorously to combat air pollution before more damage is done to the health of our citizens and before major crises occur.

By referring Bills C-25 and C-171 to the appropriate committees of the House of Commons and by calling in expert witnesses to these committees much would be learned about the nature and extent of the problem, and of what is being done and can and should be done without delay in our country. I believe also that this would give the Minister of National Health and Welfare an opportunity to state in detail what the government has already done, what it is doing now and what it proposes to do in the future about air pollution in our country.

Mrs. Margaret Rideout (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Parkdale knows of course of the great interest of the Department of National Health and Welfare in the problem of air pollution. Indeed the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen) spoke on this problem at great length in the house just recently, and also the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Winters) a week ago spoke in Toronto about the problems of air and water pollution. I may say for myself that personally I have a great concern about the problems of air pollution.

I would like to assure the hon. member that the bills to which he has referred are certainly important in so far as the department is concerned, and I can tell him that they are being given every consideration. A decision will be made very soon with regard to their reference to the appropriate committee.

Motion agreed to and the house adjourned at 10.20 p.m.
