

Pollution Research

Mr. Mahoney: If I understand the hon. member correctly in the context of his motion, that research development programs should be instituted, then he indeed may be interpreting me correctly. I would be most reluctant to duplicate programs being carried out in the United States, in terms of research, simply for the sake of having our own programs. If that is the sense in which the hon. member asked the question, then certainly he has interpreted me correctly. On the other hand, I would not for a moment advocate a deferral of immediate action on research programs of our own in areas that are not presently being handled elsewhere. If on investigation of what other countries are doing we find that research is not being conducted, or we will not have access to the results of that research, we should initiate our own programs. I appreciate the hon. member mentioning that point because it emphasizes the conclusion to my remarks.

Mr. Randolph Harding (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, I should like to take a few minutes to endorse the motion currently before the House. I do not think there is any doubt that there has been too little national research and development in respect of proper and economic solid-waste disposal. There is also an absolute necessity for conserving the natural resources we have in abundance in this country. The problem in respect of solid-waste disposal is only part of the whole problem. It seems to me that governments over the years have failed to realize that population, pollution and resources must be taken together as components of a single and indivisible system. It does not matter what you do as far as population, pollution and resources are concerned, they are tied intimately with each other.

In the mad rush in this and other countries of the world to gain material things, I believe mankind has generally overlooked the need for recycling a lot of solid-waste materials which now constitute major pollution hazards. I should like to speak very briefly on this aspect of the pollution problem. When the last Apollo space flight took place and the astronauts were circling the moon, people in Canada and all over the world received with bated breath the news that the oxygen supply of the space ship was running out. Everyone followed with close attention the astronauts' struggle to get back to the safety of the earth. I point out that the earth upon which we live is a spaceship large in size but needing similar resources whether they be in the form of oxygen, pure water or minerals. If we waste these resources or get into trouble because of their misuse, we will find that mankind will have to pay a price in years to come.

Statistics are readily available to all who search them out which indicate that if all the resources we have knowledge of in the world today were put into immediate use, those people living in underdeveloped countries could never enjoy the standards we have today in Canada. There are just not that many resources to go around. Projections indicate that over a period of time an increasing number of these resources will be used in this nation and the nation to our south. This leaves us with a problem. What have we done, or what are we going to

[Mr. Alexander.]

do to recover a great deal of the material which has already been extracted, for example in the form of minerals? Much of this material has been discarded by Canada and other nations. I will not take the time of the House today to give the time cycles regarding how long these minerals will last, but they are extremely limited. This is why it is so necessary for us to consider the question of solid-waste disposal and a program of salvaging material that in the past has been thrown away.

A tremendous amount of pollution arises from the extraction of new minerals to take the place of those which we are currently throwing away. Statistics indicate, for example, that as far as the pulp industry is concerned there would be no need for new pulp mills for a number of years if we salvaged the paper and waste material which comes from pulp. The tragedy is that in the wasteful society which has grown up around us we are causing further pollution by getting rid of waste paper. We burn it and thereby pollute the air and environment with toxic fumes. I am not going into this matter in any great detail because I would not like to see the motion talked out. I am firmly convinced that not nearly enough research is being carried on, despite the remarks of the Parliamentary Secretary. Not enough financial assistance is being pumped into these research programs. We must become more aware than ever that prevention is one of the keys to pollution control.

• (5:40 p.m.)

If we are to have abatement of pollution in this and other countries we must get down to the simple philosophy which ties pollution, population and resources together. If we do not integrate this program, I am afraid we will not be very successful in over-all pollution abatement programs so far as this or other nations are concerned. I urge the House to adopt this motion so that we may get at the basic cause of pollution in this country.

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, the motion before us this afternoon in the name of the hon. member for Hamilton (Mr. Alexander) reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should initiate a national research and development program in respect of methods of proper and economic solid-waste disposal, including studies directed to the conservation of natural resources by reducing the amount of waste and unsalvageable materials and by recovery and utilization of potential resources in solid wastes; and provide technical and financial assistance to provincial and municipal governments and multi-governmental agencies in the planning, development, and conduct of solid-waste disposal programs.

As I read this motion, it would seem the hon. member is recommending that we undertake more research in respect of the problem of solid-waste disposal. I think we all recognize the urgency of such research. I am sure that this week hon. members opposite will wish to co-operate with regard to the government's reorganization bill so that we can establish the new department on the environment and renewable resources, because certainly co-ordination is required. Much of the research which has been carried on under the federal government has been funded by Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation.