

*Canadian Environmental Protection Act*

Pesticides that are sprayed on a field in Alabama will eventually turn up in the Great Lakes system. Do you know how long it will take to do that, Mr. Speaker? Sometimes it will take less than five days from the time that the fields are sprayed in Alabama to the time those chemicals reach the Great Lakes system. It is quite incredible how quickly those contaminants can move about the continent.

A Canadian Environmental Protection Act of a comprehensive nature that would include an environmental bill of rights would not only provide a safer environment for people, but it would send a very clear signal to all Canadians of how serious we are as a country in terms of a clean environment. Once that signal is made and that leadership is provided, many Canadians would be more inclined in their own personal lives to clean up their act when it comes to dealing with perhaps something as simple as recycling garbage. They look to see if it is a serious problem, then of course they can expect the Parliament of Canada to act. That is why we are a little less than gleeful as we close off debate on the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, because it fails to provide this necessary environmental bill of rights for which most thoughtful Canadians have called for years. Now, as the polls indicate, the majority of Canadians have indicated a sincere interest in seeing it produced.

**Ms. Dewar:** My colleague referred to the study that was conducted by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and indeed the type of pollution that is taking place by urban living, the industrialization of the urban society, and the types of things that are happening to the degeneration of the sewage systems where there are treatment centres. He also referred to the areas of some cities where no treatment is taking place.

I would like to ask the Hon. Member if, when looking at this type of study, he sees the ability to implement the results and the recommendations if this Bill were strengthened to give us some control in environmental assessment?

**Mr. Riis:** I appreciate the comment of my colleague, the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Ms. Dewar). The point that she makes is very valid. There is certainly an interrelationship between the position of the urban areas in terms of their ability to treat sewage and deal with other environmental matters, and I can think here of all types of waste material.

If this Bill had been stronger in terms of requiring action and setting very clear standards as opposed to guidelines, we could make a much stronger case that the Minister of Finance ought to act in terms of providing the necessary sewage treatment facilities which are obviously needed, but a useful spin-off would be the tremendous amount of employment that would be generated over the years these new systems are being introduced. In terms of job creation, taking people off the unemployment insurance roll and giving them an opportunity to participate in meaningful and useful work in their communities, as well as cleaning up the environment, it would certainly be worth the money invested.

When it comes to dealing with the environment it is a non-partisan issue. That is why it is in the interest of all of us on all sides of the House to do what we can as cabinet Members, front-benchers, and back-benchers, to bring as much pressure to bear on the Minister of Finance as we possibly can so that he joins with his political colleagues from every part of Canada and every level of government to deal with the very tragic crisis facing our country and, in this case, our municipalities. They do not have the tax base to allow them to develop the necessary sewage treatment facilities and infrastructure in most cases, so it requires a partnership. We are all concerned about it because if one municipality upstream is polluting the river system and we are sitting downstream taking a glass of water out of that system, we want to make sure it is as pristine as possible. We all have a vested interest in ensuring that all municipalities have the ability to deal with their sewage problems in a proper way.

• (1150)

I want to thank my hon. friend for the suggestion that if we had the necessary standards that we want in this legislation, we would obviously be able to make a much stronger case to our municipal, regional, and provincial counterparts that we must all join together in a co-operative effort to clean up the environment.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** Questions and comments are now terminated. Debate.

**Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill):** Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a privilege for me to have the opportunity to enter this debate. One of the reasons I became a Member of Parliament was my concern for our environment in general, as well as our work environment. As our House Leader said earlier, the NDP caucus will support this legislation but we do so with some reluctance. We are seeing a step-by-step process to ensure the quality of our environment, but the steps are small. Indeed, with the number of new chemicals and contaminants being developed every year, we are in a very serious race just to try and maintain the quality of the environment as it is now, let alone restoring it to the condition it should be.

This debate reminds me of other debates we have had in that quite often the legislation being debated looks quite sound. The ideals are there. The general direction outlined is where we would like to progress to. However, we then discover that through the regulation-making process the concept of the legislation is often diminished. Let me give a couple of examples outside the environmental field.

There is an amendment to Bill C-79, dealing with the Elections Act, which says that the average size of a poll in Canada, presently 250 voters, will be changed. It will set the minimum size of a poll at 250 voters. The legislation has not yet been passed by Parliament, but we have already heard that the Chief Electoral Officer has instructed some returning officers to read that legislation as saying that the minimum size of a poll in Canada would be 400 to 450. That shows us