

hope it does not take too long on second reading and that it goes quickly to committee for detailed examination. I am prepared to accept changes if they are reasonable and if they go along with our main theme, which is one of prevention rather than cure, to stop pollution before it starts. Along with our new system in Environment Canada for screening projects from an environmental point of view, this legislation will help us to preserve the wonders of nature in this country. It will help to ensure that the quality of life in Canada is second to none.

Mr. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South): Mr. Speaker, I want first of all to say on behalf of the official opposition and this House that we welcome this bill and compliment the minister on bringing it forward. One can always say, of course, that it should have come forward sooner. None the less, the minister and the department have been studying a complex subject.

● (1640)

Although it is easy to say that we would have preferred to see this bill several years ago, the bill is here now and we commend the minister for bringing it forward. It is appropriate to say that this bill has serious implications for our future well-being as citizens of Canada, indeed, as citizens of the world. Let there be no mistake: all members of the House support the principle of the bill. Those outside this House who in the last year have taken pot shots at what they call radical environmentalists in this House should understand clearly that this legislation has not been introduced through any desire to interfere unduly with the legitimate activities of others but that, rather, without legislation of this kind any debate about undue interference with anybody's rights could rapidly become an academic exercise.

May I draw to the attention of the House an article in this morning's *Globe and Mail* entitled "Disastrous pollution threat seen in organic compounds use", which I shall read:

A potentially disastrous pollution threat is mounting from the uncontrolled use of organic compounds in industrial processes, says a U.S. biologist employed by the Mitre Corp., a Washington-based environmental assessment agency.

Robert Ouellette, formerly of Montreal, said yesterday that the compounds—many of which are used in the plastic, paint and paper industries—are especially dangerous to man because they can penetrate human membranes.

These compounds—such as benzyne, phenols and alpha benzpyrene—could become the real offenders to man's survival in the future, he said during an interview at the Royal Society of Canada's symposium on waste recycling and the environment.

The man-made organic compounds were used as solvents and chemical binders to make synthetic products from nylons to plastic cups, and are disposed of as waste in the air, soil and water with little understanding of potential harm.

He described their hazard as the spinoff of a burgeoning synthetic-products industry created to appease a throw-away society.

Although there are literally millions of the compounds with undetermined potential for harm, benzyne is known to damage the liver, phenols have corrosive properties and alpha benzpyrene is believed to cause cancer, said Mr. Ouellette, head of the corporation's environmental systems department.

The compounds—80 per cent of which are unavailable to the public and only used industrially—are already entering the food chain from pesticide residues, he said.

Environmental Contamination

Because the compounds were soluble in water or fat, they could penetrate human membranes, which are intended to keep foreign substances out of the body, and damage vital organs.

He described the compounds as 'non-perceived pollutants', meaning that the scientific community was only now beginning to focus on the threat. Also, the hazards of organic compounds were poorly understood and laws generally didn't deal specifically with them.

It is incumbent on members of parliament to make certain that members of the public understand why this legislation is necessary and that it must be passed and enforced. I am concerned about the form of the legislation. The minister indicated that the intent of the legislation is to prevent the manufacture and use of certain substances before we discover to our disadvantage or peril that these substances are dangerous. The definition of "dangerous substance" is wide enough to cover all substances known, unknown, invented or not invented, which can cause difficulties.

I am somewhat concerned about the way the bill has been drafted. It puts the onus on the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) or on the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Davis) to approach industry, but only when one of those ministers suspects, or has reason to suspect or believe, that a dangerous substance within the meaning of the act is being manufactured or used. The bill does not require the manufacturer or inventor of the substance to give notice to the government of its manufacture or invention, or of its sale. I wonder whether this omission is the result of an oversight on the part of those who drafted the bill, or whether there is a substantive reason for drafting the bill this way. We shall need to examine that aspect in committee.

It will be difficult for the legislation to do what is intended if the onus is placed only on the government. The bill provides that the ministers I have mentioned must suspect that a dangerous substance is being manufactured or used, or have reason so to believe. In view of the vast numbers of these substances, there may be considerable administrative obstacles to discovering which substances are being manufactured, if they are being manufactured, and where. I serve notice that we shall want to look at this aspect in committee. I make this suggestion in a spirit of co-operation and constructive criticism, as we want to pass legislation which will in every way meet the worthwhile intent the minister so clearly expressed.

Another aspect of the bill merits consideration. May I draw to the attention of hon. members clause 5(2), which reads in part:

Where, after consultation as required by subsection (1), the minister and the Minister of National Health and Welfare are satisfied that the significant danger referred to in that subsection will not be eliminated by any action taken or proposed to be taken pursuant to any other law and they propose to recommend to the Governor in Council that

(a) an order amending the schedule by adding the substance or class of substances be made under subsection 7(1) . . .

And so on.

● (1650)

That is the first mention of the word "schedule". I take it from that a schedule is indeed contemplated under this act. However, there does not seem to be any operative section that establishes the schedule. It is curious to note on going through the bill that the word "schedule" is