

Northern Inland Waters Bill

Mr. Chrétien: I will deal with that point later. The legislation deals not only with pollution of water but with the use of these water resources. When this bill is passed, anybody who wants to use these water resources of the north will be obliged to obtain a licence. If any licensee pollutes water, we will withdraw his licence. In this respect the bill is stronger because it gives to the government absolute jurisdiction in that regard.

• (8:30 p.m.)

What we are doing through this bill is looking after the interests of the people of the north. I am the minister concerned in this House of Commons; Parliament has given the responsibility for northern development and resource development to the Minister of Northern Development. Through this bill we want to assert that responsibility, and we want to assert it in respect of all inland waters.

One hon. member referred to the waters between the Arctic Islands. As I said in the House, there will be some legislation forthcoming to deal with the problem of pollution of Arctic waters, but this bill refers to inland waters.

Mr. Nesbitt: It does not say that.

An hon. Member: Just read the act for once.

Mr. Chrétien: I am not that good in English, but it refers to "inland waters". My hon. friend from Nova Scotia, who is French speaking, probably understands fully the French part of this bill which states "les ressources en eau à l'intérieur du territoire", and so on, so he should understand as well as English speaking members that this measure has relation to inland waters.

I understand the point made by some hon. members about the composition of the boards. The boards will be composed of appointees of the government and the commissioners of the Northwest Territories and the Yukon. The bill states that there shall be at least one appointed by the Yukon and Northwest Territories. There is nothing which prevents us from appointing more than one. The members appointed to the boards by the federal government will be individuals representing each department who are not only interested in the affairs of the north but are also residents of that area. I do not want people from Ottawa having to go there each time there is an application.

[Mr. Stanfield.]

The members of the boards will be specialists who are residents of the north. I think this is proper because each department involved in land and water management will be represented. Locally there will be representatives of my department. They will be recommended to me because these appointments have to be made through Orders in Council after discussion and consultation with the commissioners of the territorial councils. They will not be advisory boards but working boards which will have to deal with different applications. For this reason, the members of the boards in my opinion should be residents of the north and representatives of the department there. As I said, at least one appointment will be made by me, after consultation with the territorial governments. We say there shall be at least one such appointee. That is the wording of the legislation. I would consider favourably having more than one such representative.

There was a technical question raised by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin). He said that the boards would be made up only of civil servants because there is no provision in the bill to pay these people. As the bill states, the appointees outside the government will be recommended by the territorial councils and will come within the jurisdiction of the act that governs the territories. If we decide it is advisable that such outside people be appointed, we have the authority to have them paid by the territorial governments. I do not want to elaborate more on what I have said. I hope we will have the opportunity to take action and do things in the north that have not been done in the past. This is an unpolluted area, and I am amazed to see that the official opposition is opposed to a bill that goes as far as this one to control not only pollution but the usage of water. That is absolutely unbelievable. We want to make sure that control will be absolute in the north above the 60th parallel. The opposition says it does not want that kind of legislation. I am very amazed that opposition members oppose such a bill and want to put this matter in the fridge for years. Right now there is a danger of pollution and I am surprised that the opposition would adopt such an attitude.

Once more let me say I do not apologize to anyone for facing my responsibilities in charge of resource development in the north and for making sure that resources—almost the most important anywhere in the world—including water, are protected forever. We