

*Water Resources Programs*

Yet, Mr. Speaker, this government waits for another session before bringing in legislation to deal with this problem.

I should like to outline some of the weaknesses in the Canada Water Act, Mr. Speaker. The Parliamentary Secretary said it was an act to attack pollution, but really it is an administrative framework established in an endeavour to get the co-operation of the provinces. I endorse that because we need federal-provincial co-operation as never before. Even if only three or four provinces agree to co-operate this is better than none, and for that reason I suggest that the sections dealing with these co-operative bodies is good. But legislation is only good if it is enforced. We have enough legislation on the statute books of Canada dealing with pollution right now and perhaps if it had been enforced this problem would not be facing us. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Greene) has not enforced the legislation for which his department is responsible. In the last seven years, very few charges have been laid against industry for polluting the environment despite the existence of regulations. Mr. Speaker, sometimes I wonder just how effective this proposed legislation will be. I can assure the minister and the government that we are going to be asking questions at every turn if the propositions outlined in this particular legislation are not enforced at a very rapid pace.

What are some of the weaknesses in the bill? One is that there is no central organization. We brought in an amendment to set up a pollution control board which would co-ordinate all the legislation currently on the statute books of Canada. It would co-ordinate all departments dealing with pollution and co-ordinate the provincial and federal agencies currently engaged in pollution control. This is what we wanted but it was rejected. There is nothing in this piece of legislation to achieve this end, though numerous briefs to the committee suggested it was absolutely essential to the success of the fight against pollution. This is one of the weaknesses of the present act, that jurisdiction is fragmented. The bill proposes to set up water quality management areas, each with its own standards, which is a further fragmentation and there is no co-ordinating body to pull the pieces together. I have already dealt with national standards for the various classes of water so I will not repeat those arguments, though I think that is the second major weakness in the act.

[Mr. Harding.]

The third major weakness is the question of enforcement. In my opinion, pollution should be brought under the criminal law; it should be a crime to pollute our environment. Canadians should enjoy clean air and clean water. These things should be guaranteed by our constitution. I think there is far more danger to citizens from the pollution of our environment than from driving with more than .08 alcohol in the blood, although this is now classed as a crime. If you can enforce one law you can enforce the other. We have urged that the act be enforced nationally.

• (4:30 p.m.)

I submit there is another reason for pressing for the national enforcement of the act, and it is this. Some provinces are apprehensive, lest in their fight against pollution they drive industries away to other provinces. Yet, if standards were nationally enforced, all provinces would be in the same position and no province would be afraid that industry would move away to another province. May I point out that this party tried to bring in an amendment which would have provided for national enforcement. We tried to bring in an amendment making pollution a subject for the criminal law, but that amendment was defeated.

Another weakness in the bill is that it provides for the payment of effluent fees. We think that is wrong. Industry will still be allowed to dump effluent into the waterways of this nation, and when that dumping takes place in water quality management areas, industry must pay a fee. We think that is the wrong approach. The government's approach would have been sounder if it had offered incentives which could have taken the form of tax rebates on anti-pollution equipment or rapid write-off through depreciation on such equipment. If a municipality were involved, the government could have provided for the payment of grants to act as incentives for the acquisition of such equipment. There are numerous ways through which industry could be encouraged to tackle the job of cleaning up pollution. But you can bet your life that once you allow industry to pay fees for dumping such effluent into a river, this abuse will continue for a long period because the incentive to clean up pollution will have been removed from industry. Our party looks upon this bill as being rather weak in that respect.

May I mention another point the previous speaker referred to, namely, the export of water from Canada. Our party brought for-