

Adjournment Debate

ridiculous and ludicrous. It is not worth my effort or the time of this House to give him an answer.

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS—POLLUTION OF NIAGARA RIVER—
PROPOSED ACTION BY PROVINCE OF ONTARIO. (B) ACCESS TO
INFORMATION ON DUMP HAZARDS

Mr. Girve Fretz (Erie): Mr. Speaker, the Niagara area is one of the most picturesque areas in North America. With its mild climate and rich soil, it quickly became one of the most heavily populated areas of our Province. Unfortunately, people are polluters. So are the industries where they work and where the goods they require are manufactured. Thus begins the tragic story of pollution in the Niagara River.

Niagara Falls is the place to spend your honeymoon. With the sun setting over the magnificent spectacle of the cascading waters, the scene is one of awesome splendour. Yet in those beautiful turbulent waters is a most disconcerting array of toxic materials. Some of the most powerful poisons known to and created by mankind are found in those waters forming the backdrop for countless romantic encounters. How tragic it is in such a beautiful setting to find such ugly chemicals as dioxin, mirex and PCBs. Today I stand in this House to outline once again these problems of the Niagara River and the deplorable lack of action to combat them.

• (1810)

For decades, politicians and environmentalists have been aware of the intolerable pollution taking place in this watershed. Giant chemical companies, with a lot of cash, and perhaps political clout, have been steadfastly preaching cleanup while ignoring pleas to clean up their act. They have dumped their wastes in hastily prepared sites which have deteriorated to the point that the liquid poisons within them are now seeping into the Niagara River. This, of course, is in addition to the pathetically inadequate sewage treatment plants which dump virtually untreated human waste into this once magnificent water course.

Yes, the Niagara River is lovely to look at. Yet in the early 1960s it was described as the biggest open sewer in North America. At that time, Niagara Falls, New York, was dumping raw human wastes and industrial by-products directly into the River by means of a huge pipe opening into the River of all places, just below the American falls in full view of the public!

These are not the sixties, Mr. Speaker. We know better now. We only have finite quantities of water to work with. We must preserve the quality of these waters. We have provisions for protection of the environment. We have the International Joint Commission, the Committee on Great Lakes Water Quality. Why then does the pollution continue? The laws are in place. The chemicals have been identified. We know they are there in even more dangerous quantities as the yellow barrels in the Love Canal continue to rust and allow their nauseating contents to seep through the bedrock into one of the most famous rivers in Northern America.

Is it apathy or misplacement of priorities which accounts for the fact that Niagara Falls, New York, is still dumping

virtually untreated waste directly into the Niagara River? The modern treatment plant continues in its state of disrepair to give only primary treatment to the 65 million gallons of sewage passing through it daily. That is to say, it takes out the lumps and then adds some chlorine.

The Ontario Ministry of the Environment is aware of these assaults on the environment in the Niagara River. In a meeting with the Minister recently I noticed just how much he is aware of the problems with chemical seepage into the River. I believe he is very concerned. The Ontario Minister of the Environment has continued since that briefing in late 1982 in his efforts to negotiate a cleanup of the Niagara River, by dealing with major chemical companies and United States environmental groups. Yet how much more effective his representations would be if the Canadian Government took a much more action-oriented approach to the problem.

The main issue concerning Ontario environmentalists is the S-Area dump, which contains a mind-boggling array of death-dealing chemicals which are finding their way into the water table and into the River. It has been alleged that Hooker Chemical knows more about the makeup of the S-Area dump than they care to voluntarily admit. This matter is of enormous importance to Canadians, perhaps even more important than coal liquefaction. We need this information to undertake remedial action. Then why does the federal Government delay in offering its help to resolve the issues raised by Ontario? Mr. Parliamentary Secretary that is one of the questions you need to answer. In all fairness, it is a federal responsibility to resolve disputes of international character such as this. Once again, I ask the question to the Minister: What effort is being made to acquire the information so desperately needed on the S-Area dump? I do not want to hear that he is not party to these negotiations, as he mentioned in January. He should be party to these negotiations as federal Minister of the Environment. I understand, in speaking today with a representative of the Ontario Minister of the Environment, that the federal Government has agreed to raise our concerns with the State Department. When is this going to happen? We are all waiting with bated breath.

• (1815)

As the Member of Parliament for a constituency bordering on the Great Lakes I have spoken out on many occasions on water quality. I have read numerous reports sent out by the International Joint Commission and the Great Lakes Water Quality Group. They use great amounts of ink and paper in analysing the chemicals being emitted by various industries, and on measuring in intricate detail the substances to be found in Great Lakes water. However, little is mentioned regarding actual procedures to nail polluters and make them comply with regulations. The solution is not to slap offenders on the wrist; they should be made to clean up the mess. Not only that, when does the Minister intend to conclude his studies of pollution and do something definite about it? If there are plans to seal