

Water Resources Programs

ever, I am afraid, from our studies in the committee and from all we have heard and seen in connection with this matter, that the people are being lulled into a sense of false security in this respect.

The members of this party believe that the people are being "had" if they really think this water act will do any such thing. No legislation can ensure clean water or the restoration of impure water without national water quality standards being applied across the country. Because without these standards there is no measure of that quality. The amendment of the hon. member for South Western Nova (Mr. Comeau) as well as that moved by the hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr. Harding) clearly make this point.

The committee held 36 meetings and most of the members attended practically all of them. I think it is fair to say that two different views were held in the committee in regard to the management of water. The government's view, as put in the bill and outlined in committee, is that instead of having national water quality standards across the country, each river will have its own, separate standards which are arrived at in a completely different way from those of its neighbour and other rivers in Canada. The minister made this abundantly clear in his statement to the committee, and I should like to read an extract from his statement since reference has quite often been made to the minister's point of view in this regard. At page 2 of the statement that I have of his speech he said:

We seek to analyse and plan each river in detail and set the best standard. These standards will be for full protection of human health and aquatic life, for the preservation of recreational values and scenic beauty and all other benefits. But to set a common denominator which suits both Lake Louise and Hamilton harbour is entirely inappropriate. Since all waters could never be entirely pure, we would have to set a standard for the nation that would be less than pristine purity.

I feel like quoting to the minister the old adage that I heard during my childhood, "Heaven's your home". No one is thinking of pristine purity; it is too late for that. The minister went on:

That being the case, anyone, without stricture, could pollute our finest waters down to the national standard. I ask this committee... is that any way to treat our purest water resources? No indeed... that would be a licence—and a free one at that—to pollute.

I ask the House to pay particular attention to this next sentence:

Yet that is precisely what a national standard would do. We want to improve the quality of
[Mrs. MacInnis.]

polluted streams and to keep those now beautiful and clean in that ideal state. This is why we say no uniform standards but optimal standards.

I emphasize the minister's use of the words, "Yet that is precisely what a national standard would do". No one is proposing one standard of water for all the waterways in this country, and the minister ought to know that. He has heard it often enough in committee for it to be beyond the shadow of a doubt. These two amendments call for national standards for different classes of water across Canada. Both this afternoon and this evening the hon. member for South Western Nova made it abundantly clear that waters being used for different purposes would have different standards but that those standards should be national for those different purposes, no matter whether they be in the constituency of South Western Nova, in the Kootenay West area, the Fraser River or anywhere else.

One point I want to make abundantly clear is that we are not talking about a national standard for our waterways, but about national standards that will differ for each different class of water but which will not differ on the basis of different river basins. The minister talks of polluting *down* to the national standard. One point that I raised in the committee a number of times was that it seemed to me that the concept the minister had in mind, as did those who drafted the bill, is that the bill does not extend to water that is reasonably pure now. You would have to wait until water became really polluted before the bill would apply to it. Otherwise, why talk about polluting *down* to the national standard?

Mr. Orange: You are talking about it.

Mrs. MacInnis: I am not; I am quoting the minister. I ask the Parliamentary Secretary to note that this was a direct quotation from the minister's speech. It was he who referred to polluting down to the national standard. We do not want this at all. One reason we are worried about this bill is precisely that it takes for granted that the standards the minister and the government have in mind are standards or levels for water already polluted; they do not have in mind classes of water that are unpolluted.

Let me deal with another matter. The minister's point of view seems to have been shared in large measure by quite a number of the industrialists who appeared before the committee as witnesses. One group pointed out that pollution has arisen source by source