

*Quality of Water*

enough to fill all the country's bathtubs every ten seconds. On a global scale, fresh water constitutes only 0.2 per cent of the total water supply. Until the first decades of the 20th century, water borne diseases such as typhoid fever, claimed the lives of many Canadians. Although modern medicine has advanced to the point where this disease is no longer a serious threat, new forms of water borne disease are emerging.

The World Health Organization indicates that in the Third World diseases associated with dirty water kill 50,000 people every day, more than 80 million per year. As long as bacterial contamination of Canadian waters is allowed to continue, Canadians cannot assume that the same kind of effect could not happen here because it certainly could. I recall a month or so ago—it was in the news again several days ago—hearing about a community in New Brunswick where the total water supply is so contaminated by industrial pollutants that it is a sewer. It is not known for sure but the authorities in that community do know that the water is no longer drinkable. The people of that community have had to have bottled water shipped to them because their source of drinking water has been cut off by the contamination. I do not think that that is anything that we as Canadians either should tolerate or should continue to tolerate.

• (1850)

Several years ago, the Hon. Member for Skeena (Mr. Fulton) the former Hon. Member for Nanaimo—Alberni, Ted Miller, and I along with several others, formed a task force which went to the Niagara Peninsula to look at the problems about which the people were voicing concerns regarding the Niagara River and the Great Lakes. In the course of that four or five day visit, we had an opportunity to look at the toxic dump sites which string the New York side of the Niagara River. There is absolutely no question that from those chemical dump sites, toxins are leaching into the Niagara River.

One of those particularly dangerous toxic chemicals is dioxin. It is the form of dioxin that was used by the U.S. Army in Vietnam for the purposes of defoliating trees so that bombers and similar equipment could more clearly see what they perceived to be the enemy on the ground. Years after the Vietnam war, the U.S. Government is

finding that many military personnel are suffering from different kinds of cancer because of being exposed to that defoliant, Agent Orange, I believe it was called, in addition to effects felt by the poor people who were the victims of that kind of military attack.

Suffice it to say that one of the dumps on the New York side of the Niagara River has, I am told, tonnes of this stuff buried in it. It is that dioxin which is leaching through the dolomite rock of which the Niagara gorge is made. Dolomite rock is a very porous rock. Over the years, these companies have bulldozed the earth out to the surface of the rock and dumped the chemicals in. Some tell us that they lined the dumps with clay to keep the chemicals from leaching, but I have my doubts that that was the case. Even if that was the case, these chemicals are leaching out the walls of these dumps, going down through the porous bedrock and the groundwater into the Niagara River. Traces of this dioxin have definitely been found on the face of the Niagara Gorge.

There used to be an environmental scientist who worked with the Department of the Environment of Ontario, and I believe his name was Doug Hallett. He was a very respected individual. Doug Hallett told me, as he has said publicly in the media, that in his estimation, one shovelful of that dioxin waste, thrown into Lake Ontario, would kill that lake for thousands of years. Just one shovelful of that stuff would kill the entire lake, yet there are tonnes of this stuff buried in these dumps on the New York side of the river.

I know that various Canadian Governments have expressed concern about those dumps. There have been attempts made to convince the American Government that the only safe way to dispose of these chemical wastes is to excavate these dumps and destroy the chemicals either by incineration or by some other means. To date, as far as I know, we have not been successful in concluding these negotiations in a satisfactory way.

Hon. Members would be interested to know that after we had completed our examination of the Niagara River and surrounding area, we drew together a report on our findings. At that time, several years ago, I tabled that report in the House of Commons. If any Hon. Member is interested, I would be happy to provide a copy of that report.