

Dumping at Sea

Mr. Bob Wenman (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, many years ago Joseph Conrad wrote in his short story "Typhoon" that the sea never changes, and its works, for all the talk of men, are wrapped in mystery. This may well have been true at the beginning of the present century. It most certainly was true when Lord Byron 100 years ago wrote:

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean, roll!
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;
Man marks the earth with ruin,—his control

Stops with the shore.

Today we know that the oceans do change; that, like the land, they are vulnerable to ruin at the hand of men. Lord Byron said, "Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain." But today one supertanker can destroy half an ocean. Man's control stops with the shore, said Lord Byron; yet we pollute our rivers, and in turn, the oceans; we desecrate our air, and in turn the seas.

Times have changed. Concern for the environment is widespread. The Club of Rome's "Limits to Growth" suggests that the limits of the world's water resources will be reached long before the land limits become apparent. The World Food Conference received briefs and expressions of concern to do with the impending water shortage. According to these briefs there is to be a 24 per cent increase in water use during the next five years.

The world focused its attention on the Law of the Sea Conference. That conference in Caracas assembled the largest group of ocean scientists ever brought together in one conference, and reports tabled before that conference clearly pointed to the fact that the greatest danger before humanity today is that the oceans of the world are polluted, and the threshold where plankton can be killed by chain reaction of this pollution and never be regenerated is not known. If this threshold is crossed and the ocean plankton dies, then life on this earth as we know it will also die, because it is the plankton in the oceans of the world that provide the major part of the oxygen needed to sustain life.

Questions of the use, abuse and conservation of water resources, both inland and at sea, will be world issues, outgrowing concerns and issues of the past. Our position will move from one of negative concern regarding pollution to one of positive concern for the environment. It will move from concern for the environment to the larger question of consumption and growth; then, from growth, to questions involving energy. The next major concern of the world will be over water resource consumption, contamination, and conservation. Consequently I commend the departmental officials who had the foresight to draw up this legislation. I might even have a small, qualified word of praise for the Minister of the Environment (Mrs. Sauvé). I am a little hesitant, but I give credit where it is due. Perhaps I ought to give credit to her speech writer who wrote the speech which I am about to quote. Or perhaps she herself wrote it.

Mrs. Sauvé: I wrote it.

Mr. Wenman: Great! I like the part of the speech I am about to quote. I hope the minister meant what she said in her idealistic statement:

[Mr. Brisco.]

To wreck the environment, you need only wreck the sea. And that is not as difficult as it might seem. You need only destroy a millimetre or so of the surface—the aquatic topsoil so to speak—where the plankton, the essential first building-block of aquatic life lives. If we destroy this layer, the sea may continue, but we will not: It will be a dead sea—and as far as we are concerned a dead planet. As the sea goes, so goes mankind.

I should like to see idealistic statements of that kind considered by the Law of the Sea Congress. I commend the minister for the statement. However, let us pause a minute. Under all those frilly words, under all the perfume, flowers and scented similes, I detect something which gives rise for concern. I wonder if the minister's glowing words of concern are little more than a women's year special Don Quixote tilting at European windmills. I wonder is she ignoring the rust in her armour, or was it asbestos in her tea.

An hon. Member: Or is she catching butterflies with a tort net?

Mr. Wenman: We shall discover what sort of butterflies she has been chasing when we hear what she has to say in committee. In committee we are not concerned so much with fine speeches; we deal with practical realities. We shall ask the minister just how concerned she is about preserving the quality of our water. Let me quote to the House what she said in answer to my question on November 25, 1974, as recorded at page 1621 of *Hansard*. My question to the minister, to do with water quality, we recorded in *Hansard* as follows:

A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. The minister suggested that studies are being undertaken. Can she tell the House under whose authority those studies are undertaken, in order to assure Canadian people that Canadian water supplies are safe and uncontaminated. To which studies was the minister referring?

What did the minister say? Did she say yes, we are undertaking water studies, to assure the people of Canada that their drinking water supplies are safe? She said, in answer to my question, as recorded in *Hansard*:

Mr. Speaker, numerous studies are undertaken. Water quality and possible hazardous effects on health are looked after by the Department of National Health and Welfare—

I took her at her word and directed my question to the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) at a committee meeting on April 17. What did the minister say? He said, "I am afraid this matter is at the present time more a matter for the Department of the Environment..." We are back to the environment. When it comes to water policy, where does the minister stand? Where does the minister of National Health and Welfare stand? Where does the government stand?

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An hon. Member: You have not caught her yet.

Mr. Wenman: I caught her in a contradiction. She is passing the buck. Where does it stop?

I want to know what is our overall water policy. While we are espousing these fine words and bringing forth these bills, which are just pieces of paper, virtually raw sewage from British Columbia cities is spewing forth into the Fraser River and on into the Pacific Ocean. It is flowing from Quebec cities into the St. Lawrence and on