

Water Resources

I am afraid the task of cleaning up our oceans will make the task of cleaning up our fresh waters seem like the rinsing out of a wash basin or bath after a shower.

We can clean up our fresh water, and we shall do so. This bill, meagre and fainthearted as it is in its approach, is at least one step. I commend my hon. friend from Parry Sound-Muskoka and my hon. friend from South Western Nova for their restraint in dealing with it—they recognized, as I do, that this measure is at least a step—but I shall never understand the government's cowardice in not going all the way; I shall never understand the failure of the government to come to grips with the problem of pollution by big industry. By foisting this off on to the provinces it is saying there is no way by which federal standards can be brought to bear. This avoidance of responsibility is cowardly. This is not what Canadians want, at least not the ones I talk to. Constitutional issues be damned! The preservation of our fresh water is important. The cleanliness of our salt water is also important. If we are to wait until we see what the provinces do in terms of establishing quality control areas in order that the federal act can be applied, I am afraid we are only delaying the solution to these questions, nothing more.

The cleaning up of our rivers, lakes and streams will be a costly process but if we fail to do something of consequence soon, either unilaterally or on a multi-national basis to protect our salt waters, it will take hundreds of years and untold expenditure to remedy the damage.

There are dangers, and they are becoming increasingly evident. Three major explosions have occurred aboard oil tankers off the coast of Africa—inexplicable explosions which have crippled and sunk three 200,000 ton oil tankers. They were empty, thank God, but what would have happened if they had been full—if 200,000 tons of crude oil, or however many tons or barrels of oil their cargo represents, had been spilled into the ocean? I do not say that something is not being done. The oil companies concerned have moved swiftly; they have accepted their responsibility for trying to determine the cause of these accidents. They realize the long lasting effect of the breaking up of large supertankers on the high seas. All the world realizes the danger. We have all seen what happened in California. We have all seen what happened when the *Torrey Canyon* broke up in the Bristol Channel. Well, we in Canada, with one of the

longest coast lines in the world, have failed to include any reference whatsoever in this bill to what may be the greatest resource we possess—the waters contiguous to our three coasts.

• (4:20 p.m.)

I hope that when this bill goes to committee, the committee members will call before them people who will tell them about the danger of pollution to our salt waters, people who can speak with some exactness and on the basis of knowledge about the cost of cleaning up polluted salt water as compared with that of cleaning up inland water. For example, I would hope they would take a look at Bedford Basin, which is already dangerously close to being in a very serious situation. I have been told that a body of fresh water similar in size to Bedford Basin could be cleaned up in a matter of a few short years, but that Bedford Basin would require many years' work because it is salt water.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I lament the failure of the government to recognize the oneness of the resource that is water. I lament its failure to mention the oceans that surround us. I regret the failure of Canada to bring the matter of pollution before international bodies. This has lessened our international reputation. Certainly, we are concerned with and join international debates on the peaceful uses of the sea bed. We have great concern over the location of detection devices on our continental shelf, and over the strategic value of undersea weaponry.

Earlier today we heard one hon. member express concern about the report of a standing committee on which he serves. Yes, Mr. Speaker, we are concerned, but I suggest it is only in a casual, superficial way. When it comes to translating our thoughts into action, we pussyfoot. We use every device known to us to avoid facing fundamental truths and facts.

I am pleased to belong to a party which would never bring a bill of this nature before the House of Commons, a bill which goes only part way down what is a very long road. That road is a two-way street. I hope members of the committee which will examine this bill will accept the responsibility of tidying it up, of making it worthy of our intentions to combat pollution not only of our fresh waters but of the oceans surrounding us, waters that are our greatest human resource.

Mr. John Skoberg (Moose Jaw): Mr. Speaker, on rising to take part in the discussion on