

*Supply*

Is the suggestion of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) agreed to?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

### VETERANS AFFAIRS

MOTION TO REFER REPORT OF JOINT STUDY GROUP ON BASIC RATE OF PENSIONS TO STANDING COMMITTEE

**Mr. MacEachen (for Mr. MacDonald, Cardigan)** moved:

That the Report of the Joint Study Group on Basic Rate of Pensions, tabled January 31, 1973, be referred to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

Motion agreed to.

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### SUPPLY

APPROPRIATION ACT No. 1, 1973

The House resumed, from Wednesday, February 14, consideration in committee of Bill C-141, for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the Public Service for the year ending 31st March, 1973—Mr. MacEachen (for Mr. Drury)—Mr. McCleave in the chair.

**The Chairman:** When the committee rose last evening Vote 20a, Department of the Environment was under consideration.

On clause 2—*Schedule*.

**Mr. Harding:** Mr. Chairman, I should like to take this opportunity to deal briefly and generally with the Department of the Environment. Some progress has certainly been made since the department was set up and some encouraging steps are being taken but, on the whole, the over-all accomplishment in the environmental field is rather disappointing. I should like to outline several areas where I feel fundamental weaknesses exist, and also suggest some changes which might help to eliminate these weaknesses. First, I should like to make a few general comments.

There has been major neglect of environmental problems in every part of Canada over the years. All levels of government, and the public generally, have allowed this environmental deterioration to continue. Those who did speak out were accused of standing in the path of progress or of trying to deliberately remove job opportunities from some specific local area. For the most part, in the past, the general public accepted with very little protest the right of industry to pollute our air and water, for employment and job opportunity was of paramount importance. The feeling was that pollution of our environment was a small price to pay if jobs were produced in the process. Few people realized that the real accounting

[Mr. Speaker.]

from pollution would have to come years later, and that the cost would be tremendous.

Years of neglect and lack of action by government at all levels has led to some major pollution problems, not only in Canada but in most of the industrialized nations of the world. In fact, the situation is becoming so serious the very existence of our civilization is threatened. The warning signs are to be found everywhere, yet many nations including our own are not giving real leadership in meeting this challenge. To a large extent, the real problem is being ignored, for governments of the day are not yet prepared to make those major changes in our society which are required to provide a clean, healthy and safe environment in which to live and work. This federal government is not prepared to take action or to give the leadership required in many important environmental fields, and as a result, Canadians in the future will be saddled with the unenviable task of trying to clear up environmental problems which can be prevented if adequate measures are taken in time.

• (1620)

This government has had the opportunity to give real leadership in the environmental field. It has failed to adequately meet the challenge. At a time when Canadians were looking for a national and a unified approach in the field of environment, this government has failed to act. At the very time that the United Nations was calling for a common international outlook and direction, and stressing the need for a unified approach on a global scale, we find the government of Canada deliberately fragmenting our national approach to the problem. We had an opportunity to set national standards when the Canada Water Act was by the last parliament, but instead the government opted for the right of each province, in effect, to set its own standards, and fragment the jurisdiction and control more than ever before. The result has been that the Canada Water Act, which was to be the main weapon in the fight against water pollution throughout Canada, has remained on the statute books, without being effectively used by the department.

I have said on other occasions that Canada needs an integrated environmental policy. This is essential, if we are to meet the many changes facing us in the environmental field today. Our earth has limited carrying capacity for human beings. The basic elements potentially supportive to life, were placed on earth eons ago, and through the agents of evolution, systems have been developed which constantly recirculate these basic elements. The interplay between organisms and this environment has given rise to complex life support systems, in which the air, water, nutrients and energy supplies for the inhabitants of earth are normally maintained by the function of the inhabitants themselves. Man is so utterly dependent on these natural processes that the policies he devises to govern his actions, must ensure their maintenance at all times. This is not being done and there is increasing evidence that some life support systems are being severely damaged. It is for this reason that work on our environmental problems is so important.

Most of the resources on earth are indefinitely renewable through natural cycles, but some of them are not. For example, the continuous provision of high grade mineral