

Canada Safe Drinking Water Act

Contaminants from the Love Canal site are believed to have caused cancer chromosome damage, birth defects and respiratory trouble. We just do not know how great a price will be paid somewhere down the road for medical treatment, hospital charges, disability pensions, days lost from work and personal suffering.

Residents of Toronto are concerned about the quality of the water they drink. It is estimated that Toronto residents spend \$4 million per year on bottled drinking water. What about the economic costs of a polluted water system, Mr. Speaker? Again according to the *Layman's Guide* to which I referred before:

The economic value of Lake Ontario is enormous. The replacement cost of this resource has never been estimated. Increasing contamination of this resource will make it necessary for us to undertake this calculation as it becomes obvious that this resource is not inviolate.

As I pointed out, Mr. Speaker, one of the crucial faults with the present situation regarding drinking water quality is the lack of enforceable standards. We have some guidelines but they are not enforceable and cover a very limited range of the chemicals to which we are exposed in water, and it is questionable whether the maximum limits are really safe. That is why I propose the creation of a Water Review Board which would provide opportunities for public input into the making of regulations to set levels for contaminants in drinking water.

In the face of the serious problems facing Lake Ontario and our water environment generally, I find it absolutely incredible that the actions of this particular Government would have been such that they seriously affect, if not destroy, the policing activities which have been going on by scientists through government funding over the years. The present Government says it is making industrial growth a priority in Canada. We certainly need jobs, Mr. Speaker, but let us not create them at the expense of the environment and people's health. Let me assure the Government that environmental health concerns are not seen by Canadians as a luxury.

I, along with many other Canadians, was disappointed to hear the response of the present Minister of State for Science and Technology (Mr. Siddon) on CBC radio to questions about cut-backs in environmental research. He said he considered "environmental quality as a service; it is not in itself an engine of economic growth". This implies that environmental quality has to take a back seat to industrial growth. I completely reject that notion. It is this type of attitude which has created the environmental crisis that our planet faces today. We do not own our environment. We simply borrow it from future generations. We have absolutely no right at all to use our environment as some kind of giant sewage disposal system for industry. Surely industry and Government have a responsibility to ensure that our environment is a safe place in which present generations and future generations which have yet to be born can live.

During the election campaign, the present Government stated:

A P.C. Government will work with the provincial Governments to establish a set of regulations which will lead to standards for safe drinking water. This will

be accomplished with due regard to the best practical technology and to economic constraints.

I would simply invite members of the Government not to talk this Bill out. Rather, they should ensure that the Bill is referred to committee where the public can have full input not only into the existence of those hazardous chemical wastes in drinking water, but can also undertake a close examination and have some input as to how the Government is formulating policies in so far as they affect our environment.

I have had more correspondence, not only from constituents, but from people across the country who are seriously concerned about what the Government is doing with regard to these cut-backs in environmental projects and in research. I would urge Members of the government side to use whatever pressure they can within their own caucus circles to put pressure on the policy makers to ensure that our environment is not going to take a back seat when Government is formulating policy.

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to join in the debate today since I represent the great riding of Hamilton East which happens to be the most industrialized riding in the country of Canada. The people of Hamilton, and in particular the steel workers, are well aware of the problems associated with the environment and in particular the problem of clean water which we are being confronted with in the discussion of the Bill today.

Having spent some time in the Ontario legislature, I have some understanding of the process involved with respect to provincial involvement. It seems to me that we must look at this issue of clean water, not only from the federal perspective, but also from the point of view of provincial as well as municipal responsibility.

● (1720)

The Member for Beaches (Mr. Young) will be aware that the Canada Water Act was originally introduced by a Liberal Government at the federal level to give this country jurisdiction over our water. At the same time we have seen from time to time very serious problems being created because of the lack of provincial intervention.

I speak specifically of the situation in the Niagara River and more particularly about the situation in the Member's own riding of Beaches last year. The House will be aware that the federal Government, through its Capital Recovery Program, was able to provide financial assistance to try to clean up the situation of the beaches not only in the riding of Beaches, but across the City of Toronto and other regions of Ontario, including Sudbury and St. Catharines.

As a Liberal, I am proud to say that our role in bringing environmental issues to public attention takes a back seat to no one. I think of the work that was done by the former Member for Sault Ste Marie on the issue of acid rain. His committee was able to bring to the attention of the public and of Parliament the necessity for Canada to be prepared to act alone on acid rain emissions if the United States, under the