

*Fisheries Act*

When one considers the question of waste as it is defined in the clause of the bill, after the part which I read defining waste, the following words appear:

—without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes anything that, for the purposes of the Canada Water Act, is deemed to be waste;—

So, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that if we are to understand the meaning and the purport of the bill that the Minister of Fisheries is presenting we must inevitably have a look at what is said in clause 16 of the Canada water bill. Clause 16(1) of that bill reads:

(1) The Governor in Council may make regulations (a) prescribing

- (i) substances and classes of substances,
- (ii) quantities or concentrations of substances and classes of substances in water, and
- (iii) treatments, processes and changes of water for the purpose of subsection (2) of section 2—

This all sounds very complicated until one refers to clause 2 of the Canada water bill. So, Mr. Speaker, we find ourselves in a bit of a maze. I think it should be pointed out that we now have before this Parliament four bills, if my count is correct, in which the precise wording of the definition of "waste" appears.

We have before this Parliament Bill C-144, the Canada Water Act bill, Bill C-187 the Northern Inland Waters Act bill, Bill C-202 the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act bill, and this bill, C-204, to amend the Fisheries Act. But all of these bills, all of what they mean or what they do not mean, depends upon the acts that may or may not be taken in the future by the Governor in Council under clause 16 of the Canada Water Act bill.

In other words, until we know what the government has in mind in the shape of regulations prescribing substances and classes of substances, and quantities and concentrations, and treatments and processes, we in this House have no way of knowing whether or not we are being asked to throw down the drain the whole impact of the Fisheries Act so far as protection of the quality of our waters, for the well being of our fish, is concerned.

The minister may say, "Tut, tut; you know this government isn't that bad." But, Mr. Speaker, I suggest it is not fair to ask the House to buy a pig in a poke. Some of us who have had some association with the administration of the Department of Fisheries for a period of years have some respect for the approach taken by the conservation and development branch of the department, with the

[Mr. Barnett.]

backing of the Fisheries Research Board of Canada. I think it is fair to say that over the years they have been really the only cohesive body in Canada which has been concerned with the quality of Canadian water from coast to coast and off the coasts of Canada.

In his speech, the minister paid considerable tribute to the department which he heads at the present time. I certainly concur with many of his sentiments in that respect. In fact, in some respects I would be prepared to go further than the minister did, because I think, under unfortunate circumstances, the department which the minister currently heads has been doing a magnificent job in trying to protect, develop and conserve the fisheries resources of Canada and, because of that, has been attempting to conserve the quality of the waters of Canada. It has been an uphill fight and they have lost a good many battles, Mr. Speaker, largely through the indifference and neglect of succeeding governments and, I suppose, of succeeding Parliaments of Canada, and in the last analysis, because of the indifference and neglect of most of the Canadian people over a long period of years.

• (4:20 p.m.)

However, there is evidence of greater interest now in the quality of our waters than there has ever been in any previous Parliament, as exemplified by the number of bills before us dealing with the subject. But are we just going through the motions, Mr. Speaker; are we just engaged in a song and dance about the desirability of preserving our waters? This is a question in the minds of many members of the House and many Canadian people. I ask members not to discard the existing power that resides in the Fisheries Act until there is something better to replace it. So far, there has been no tangible evidence of this. Various bills propose to set up elaborate and complex administrative machinery. Most of us will agree that some of it is necessary and this view was expressed in this House in respect of the bill to deal with the pollution of Arctic waters. One of the ideas expressed in the Canada water bill, namely the management of watersheds on a countrywide basis, is a sound idea.

In all of these bills, Mr. Speaker, Parliament is being asked to move forward blindly without the assurance that they really mean anything when it comes to controlling or preventing the pollution of our waters. I, for one, am not prepared to agree to the passage of