

Adjournment Debate

My point here, Mr. Speaker, is that we have Creosote Road and Chemical Creek, and an extremely cavalier attitude taken by Governments at both levels over a long period of time.

Environment Canada and the Government of Canada has had between 1969 and 1988 to act. It found dioxins in water. It ignored recommendations to test the levels around the brook leading from the plant. It waited seven years for the company to test ground water itself, and did not do its own tests. It did not use the powers of the Fisheries Act to clean up the plant site. Ten years of pollution could have been avoided. The power is there. We have Environment Canada. Fisheries is federal jurisdiction. The opportunity to have acted earlier was there.

● (1805)

I hope that this will be a lesson to the federal Government that we need early, prompt action for adequate protection of the health of people in the area and the environment.

Mrs. Pauline Browes (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the Domtar wood preservation plant, located near the Miramichi River at Newcastle, New Brunswick, has been in operation for over 60 years. The company began using pentachlorophenol in 1957 at this plant. Certain dioxins are known to be associated with pentachlorophenol, but the highly toxic 2,3,7,8-TCDD has not generally been believed to be one of them.

In 1981 Environment Canada undertook a study of the Domtar site to assess possible contamination. Dioxins were found in a ditch draining the site. A second study was conducted in 1984 which confirmed the presence of dioxins. Very low levels of 2,3,7,8-TCDD were identified. As expected, the predominant dioxin was octochlorinated dibenzo-p-dioxin.

The 1981 study report made several recommendations. Most of these have been carried out, including definition of the type of dioxin present in 1984 and installation of waste water treatment facilities in 1983-85. As a follow-up to this work, the New Brunswick Department of Municipal Affairs and Environment and Domtar undertook further site investigation in 1985 and in 1987. Additional sampling has confirmed that there is contamination of soil and ground water in the plant area.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans determined the presence of dioxins in lobsters several kilometres downstream from the Domtar site. No trace of the more dangerous 2,3,7,8-TCDD dioxin was found in the lobsters. The results of this study were made available to Environment Canada in late 1987 and has underlined the necessity for a full evaluation of contamination from this site, as well as other possible sources of dioxin near the Miramichi River.

While we had recently been under the impression that a clean-up was imminent or under way, we have since been informed that only preparatory work with some excavation had been initiated at the site through last fall. The Domtar

company is now in the process of re-examining all relevant information in order to develop a more acceptable proposal for the clean-up of the site. This proposal must be satisfactory to the Province of New Brunswick and to Environment Canada. Meetings to address this remedial work are under way. The environment department expects to see a company proposal for clean-up this month.

The presence of dioxin in the Miramichi River is a complicated issue. A pulp and paper mill just up river from the Domtar site uses a bleached-kraft process. This process has just recently been recognized as suspect in the generation of dioxins. In view of this complication, Environment Canada is undertaking a study of sources of dioxin in the Miramichi River. This study will be part of a national study set in motion by Environment Canada to define the seriousness of the problem, with a view to seeking clean-up action on the part of any identified polluter.

Recent reports now indicate that Domtar is not going to reopen the plant. Nevertheless, the clean-up will continue. Fortunately, due to the foresight of Environment Canada and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the Miramichi problem will probably be defined earlier than most.

CANADA POST CORPORATION—CLOSURE OF RURAL POST OFFICES—PROVISION OF ALTERNATE SERVICES

Mr. Bob Corbett (Fundy—Royal): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate having the opportunity to discuss further a question which I brought to the attention of the Minister responsible for Canada Post some number of weeks ago. It is with reference to the closure of post offices in rural Canada.

There is no question that all reasonable and responsible Canadians would support any measure which would make Canada Post more cost effective and cost efficient. Certainly I have stated in the House and in my constituency on numerous occasions that I will support any reasonable plan that will bring postal spending under control and will reduce the burden on the taxpayer.

● (1810)

In 1981, Bill C-42 came into effect, turning Canada Post into a Crown corporation. This took place for a number of reasons, not the least of which was the fact that in the Post Office, there were a number of people at the time and continue to be to this day who were concerned about labour. Labour unrest was profound and labour disputes were indeed many. It was also a fact that the Post Office had accumulated a tremendous debt load and it was a haven for political patronage.

These problems were well recognized prior to 1981. In the 1970s, the Hon. Eric Kierans was Postmaster General under former Prime Minister Trudeau's administration. He determined that indeed the fat should be trimmed from the Post Office. During that period of time, Mr. Kierans undertook to close down some 1,000 post offices in rural Canada without