

Water Resources

Mr. Gibson: Thank you, I will. The bill before the House represents a systematic attack on the problem of water pollution, jointly with the provinces wherever possible but alone, if necessary, to achieve the aim of clean water. In order for this bill to succeed, it is necessary that industry, municipal and provincial governments give their full co-operation.

The member who last spoke exhorted the minister to provide finance for city sewage systems. This question is already actively being studied by the government and efforts are being made to provide finance. Largely due to the minister's efforts, lots of industries, in co-operation with the provinces and federal government, have provided large sums of money to combat pollution. In the Hamilton area large sums of money have been earmarked to clean up the bad spots of Hamilton Bay. This has been a joint project, a co-operative effort, largely instigated by the minister, and it has resulted in this approach to pollution problems.

This bill is a big step forward in the control of our resources. It represents a constructive approach to the protection of our environment. It is a great bill, and I am sure that it will lead to a vast improvement in this difficult area.

Obviously, the bill contemplates water pollution control in the new areas of regional development. I hope that this extremely important aspect of pollution control will be kept in mind when areas of the country are newly developed under our regional expansion plans as well as when we open up the great north of this country. I hope that in the matter of pollution control we will not make the mistakes of the past but guard against them with sensible, well co-ordinated pollution regulations. I suggest this legislation provides the right sort of signpost to point the way to the achievement of this end.

We are conscious of the need to protect the regions of the Northwest Territories, the Yukon and the Arctic areas as well as the heavily populated areas to the south. The per capita use of water in urban centres is rapidly increasing, and total urban consumption is likely to have more than doubled by 1980.

Programs on pollution on CBC television and also the publicity given to the problem on radio and in the press have all played a substantial part in bringing to the attention of the public the necessity for action by all levels of government and industry to deal with this vitally important subject.

The real issue can be summarized as follows: Will we permit the development of our natural environment to be ruined by pollution? The federal government has a vital responsibility in this regard and it has assumed it.

I wish for a moment to speak to the question of pollution in the Great Lakes and along the international boundary. With the Canada Water Act now before us, I suggest that the federal government commence negotiations with the federal government of the United States, the governments of border states and our own provincial border governments with a view to establishing an international pollution control agency. The purpose of the agency would be to prevent pollution of the Great Lakes and of the boundary waters between Canada and the U.S.A. We should give this agency power to enforce pollution control by means of fine or injunction against offenders along the borders of Canada and the U.S.A.

Some might say that this is far too precipitate action; that we are just starting out on pollution control and it will take a long time to work out a constructive agreement with the United States. I agree it will take a long time, but let us start now at this early stage of our initial phases of pollution control.

Perhaps this agency could operate under the aegis of the International Joint Commission. Nevertheless, it seems to me that since we are preparing now to clean up our own waterways, this is the time to urge the United States to co-operate in a joint venture within which the international body could take action to establish enforceable anti-pollution controls.

It may be said that such a venture of this kind would be difficult and cumbersome and unlikely to succeed. But it is obvious to me that the good work done on the Canadian side of the border should be augmented by a co-ordinated effort by our neighbour to the south.

I am compelled by a sense of urgency to suggest that preliminary steps be taken now to illustrate to the United States governments concerned that we mean business. Since it may not be possible to devote large sums of money to this type of project now, I suggest it may be possible to bring it about without a great deal of expense. Perhaps the Canada-U.S.A. parliamentary association could deal with the question, or perhaps it could be dealt with on an informal basis. But at least we should make an enthusiastic start.