

Water Resources

[Translation]

WATER RESOURCES**PROVISION FOR MANAGEMENT INCLUDING
RESEARCH AND PLANNING AND
IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAMS**

The House resumed from Thursday, November 20, consideration of the motion of Mr. Greene that Bill C-144, to provide for the management of the water resources of Canada including research and the planning and implementation of programs relating to the conservation, development and utilization of water resources, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on National Resources and Public Works.

[English]

Mr. Louis-Roland Comeau (South Western Nova): Mr. Speaker, this is my third attempt to try to speak on the matter of pollution. Last spring we had a debate on water. We had an opposition day debate, and I was the last speaker scheduled. Last November we spent a couple of days discussing the subject, and again I was the last speaker scheduled. Today I am glad to be the first speaker.

Let me say at the outset that any measure introduced by the government to curb pollution is certainly welcomed by all members of the House. The minister explained this bill four or five weeks ago. The pollution of water is not a problem for the future; it is a problem which requires our immediate consideration. It is in this context that I wish to make a few remarks on this bill known as the Water Act.

Man is living through an environmental crisis of his own making. Early in his evolution man was a passive agent in his surroundings, largely controlled by the factors of the environment. But modern man has become much more powerful. He can even use his technology to regulate elements of his environment. The extent of man's influence on his surroundings is escalating rapidly. Indeed, scientists warn us that the environmental changes brought about in this generation of human hyperactivity have been greater than those of all the years since the appearance of man on earth. But while we have learned to control or affect individual elements of nature, we are still far from understanding the complex interrelations between ourselves and our environment.

[Mr. Harding.]

● (5:30 p.m.)

Too often human technology is used in ways which unintentionally worsen, not improve, the quality of life in our society. Too often the by-product of our progress is pollution, pollution of our surroundings or the disturbance of the delicate interrelationships of our environment. Striking examples of unintentional effects resulting from all kinds of activity abound. For example, on its introduction, DDT was heralded as a successful agent for the control of insect pests, but now its effects have led to its removal from the majority of its applications.

The unintended effects of man's efforts may go far beyond the potential pollution of his world. Scientists are also beginning to wonder whether man's "progress" will substantially affect such important processes as those which control the volume of oxygen in our air and the earth's heat balance. The potential effects of such changes are obvious. They have led one eminent ecologist to state:

What is now popularly known as 'progress' begins to look very much like the path to extinction.

Pollution has been referred to as a patient assassin which chokes its victims ever so slowly and silently. We must learn to consider all the effects of our actions. We must preserve a clean, healthy, enjoyable environment and we must safeguard the biological balance of nature. Man must not be allowed to pollute himself out of existence.

Pollution has been around for a long time. But what has happened in Canada? We have been very fortunate, Mr. Speaker; we have a big country with a lot of water and a lot of air. But anyone who has smelled the river outside this building, travelled the Gardiner expressway in Toronto on a still morning, or makes his living providing the country with herring from Placentia Bay knows what pollution is.

We cannot afford to sit back in confidence. We should count ourselves lucky that we have no Los Angeles, where carbon-dioxide levels are 10 per cent higher than normal. We cannot afford to be complacent. At the moment this bill does not deal completely—I underline "completely"—with pollution.

Let us first look at fishing. Forest spraying in New Brunswick has led to observations of fish mortality running between 50 and 98 per cent. Pollution has seriously affected shellfish beds. It is estimated that 25 per cent of the clam and oyster beds have been closed as a