

Water Resources

on February 9, 1967, gave the Department of National Health and Welfare primary responsibility for abating water pollution resulting from the operation of federal government facilities. Though we had a different Prime Minister in 1967, a Liberal government was in power. Many hon. members now in the chamber were here in 1967. The decision taken then applied to the departments, the Crown corporations and the Crown agencies.

Since then, reports have been received. Time does not permit me to go into them in detail, but the crown corporations are among the worst offenders in Canada as far as pollution is concerned. There are army camps which run raw sewage into our rivers; yet here we have a cabinet decision giving a government department the right to ensure that things of this kind do not happen. If hon. members wonder why we are critical and apprehensive when we see a new administrative structure being set up, it is because the government has done nothing with the power it already possesses. These are the things that worry our party and which I know concern the general public of Canada.

An hon. Member: There is a difference.

Mr. Harding: I could deal with a whole series of acts bearing on this question. There is the National Harbours Act. What about the dumping of 150,000 tons of acid into Hamilton Bay? What was done about that? Nothing.

Mr. Gibson: You know nothing about it. We are working on it.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Harding: In 1909 the Boundary Waters Treaty was signed with our neighbour to the south. It provided for the creation of a commission. The treaty states:

● (8:50 p.m.)

—boundary waters and waters flowing across the boundary shall not be polluted on either side to the injury of health or property on the other side.

Consider what we have in the Great Lakes system. The situation in the United States is as bad or worse than it is in Canada. We have a treaty which prohibits the polluting of these waters, but it has never been enforced because we have a weak administration. This point should be made crystal clear to the people of Canada.

One thing that has worried me is that we have not had any uniformity of standards. I should like to deal with this matter before my

time expires. The minister said this afternoon that this measure will lead to the controlling of pollution. That is a little different from my interpretation of the bill. Let me quote from an article which appeared in the *Toronto Telegram* of November 4 regarding a meeting held to explain the provisions of the Canada Water Act. I am now more apprehensive about the situation, having read the words of some officials of the department. These people were attending a Great Lakes conference at the education centre in Toronto. While newspaper articles can be misleading, this article states that Dr. Prince, a very fine and capable individual, said:

Dr. Prince, an expert in water resources said industries and municipalities and other sources of waterways pollution would be charged fees for the right to pollute.

The article continues:

He said, too, that pollution would not be defined by the Act, but would be determined instead by regional water quality management boards. These boards would determine how much pollution was acceptable in any of their areas of reference.

The article goes on to state:

"If people are not prepared to put any substance, any part of the gross national product into their environment, then they can wallow in their own juices until kingdom come," he said.

That is not my interpretation of the minister's remarks this afternoon. I understood this money was to be used to clean up the problem of pollution. As I read the act, it is to be left to the regional boards to decide upon the fee to be charged in respect of pollution. The article then states:

His evaluation of the act... caused shock and disappointment among many at the conference.

The article says, further:

—as Dr. Prince explained it, polluters will be able to continue polluting by paying fees to the regional water board "commensurate with the degree of pollution".

The regional boards—whose composition has not been determined—would decide how much the levy would be and how it would be used.

He anticipated that the money would be used by the boards to fight the pollution caused by the fee-payer. He suggested the fees would be high enough to make the polluter look to installing his own control.

The regional boards would also have the right to prosecute offenders—and would have the right to do so with degrees of discrimination. They could not, however, force offenders to install pollution control equipment or get out of the business.

What this means, Dr. Prince admitted, is that one regional board, going on its self-established definition of pollution, could force a firm into major expense or even out of business, while a similar firm could pollute with impunity in another region.