

Water Resources

of mercury in remote lakes and streams in Manitoba, an area which up to that time most Canadians thought to be beyond taint.

What has the government done while faced, as it is, with such an urgent challenge? It has produced a bill that utilizes none of the powers at the exclusive disposal of the federal authorities; a bill which, to be effective at all, requires the full consent and co-operation of the provinces. This government has always been very exact and meticulous about its exertion of power and financial assistance in the area of personal health care services. Why are they not so aggressive and positive in meeting a social problem which I believe to be of far greater proportions and of even greater urgency?

As far as I can see, this bill simply provides that certain action may be taken in some restricted areas, and only after agreement is secured from a province to act jointly. Its provisions apply only to a river basin for which a joint federal-provincial water control board has been established. Aside from the fact that the establishment of such a board will be a long and cumbersome process, the bill fails to provide for the essential financing of the work of the board once it has been established. I presume the intent is that the province or the community affected, or both, will be asked to foot the bill. I can well imagine the speed and effectiveness of any action when three levels of government are left to haggle over the bill.

● (8:50 p.m.)

This bill only permits federal action by agreement with the province. There is no provision for the federal authority to act of its own volition. In other words, Mr. Speaker, there is nothing in the bill that will permit the federal government to provide the aggressive leadership and set the pattern for comprehensive, anti-pollution action that this critical challenge demands. Above all, the bill fails to stipulate any financial backing for action that might be contemplated under its provisions.

One of the greatest gaps in the bill is its failure to prescribe any standards of water purity or any standards of control and prevention methods. There is no national code; there is no national goal. The ideal of pollution-free waters is not even hinted at in this shockingly defective piece of legislative drafting. Reading the bill leaves me with the distinct impression that the federal government has deliberately shirked its responsibilities to

protect Canada's natural resources and environment, and the health and well-being of her people. This bill is a legislative mirage; it appears to tackle the problem but in reality avoids it. The ball has been successfully tossed back into the lap of the provinces.

There is clear authority in the provisions of the British North America Act for federal leadership and action in the area of a national anti-pollution battle. Within its constitutional jurisdiction the federal government controls vast areas of land, water and air, certainly sufficient for a determined federal government to establish anti-pollution procedures, standards of purity, a pattern of public behaviour hostile to pollution, and a clear example to be followed by other governments.

The federal government does not have to wait upon the provinces in starting the fight against pollution. It has more than ample scope to go it alone if necessary. So far it has failed dismally to give a lead or inspire action. It could make a good start by coordinating anti-pollution action in all federal jurisdictions, departments, agencies, and under all federal statutes. Pollution is a national problem requiring national leadership and national co-ordination.

The bill permits the federal government to act only in the restricted area of water pollution control and to act alone, free of provincial agreement, only in the very restricted area of inter-jurisdictional waters. This, I presume, means such waters as the Ottawa River, which constitutes a provincial boundary. Even here, stinking as it does under the very noses of Parliament, the Ottawa River has not been tackled by the federal authority. The bill provides only an endless array of federal-provincial commissions, boards and other agencies, each with its own program tailored to the needs of the locality in which it may be situated, and each with its own standards and procedures.

An attempt has been made to give the bulldog the illusion of teeth by providing for a penalty of \$5,000 a day for committing the offence of pollution. But where are the standards set out, the violation of which would constitute an offence punishable by a fine of \$5,000? What, indeed, is water pollution according to this bill? Under the provisions of the bill it is conceivable that an industry discharging effluent into a body of water common to two or more provinces could be guilty of pollution in one and not guilty in the other. There is no national standard. I

[Mr. Ritchie.]