

*Health and the Environment*

the environment, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Forestry.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I am trying to determine who has spoken in this debate. The hon. member for Kamloops-Cariboo (Mr. Marchand) introduced the bill at this stage; therefore there is nothing to prevent the Minister of the Environment (Mrs. Sauvé) from addressing the House at this time.

**Mr. Baldwin:** Mr. Speaker, we are delighted to hear the minister speak, so long as it is understood that she is not closing the debate.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** It should also be noted that the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Fraser) insisted on the minister making a speech. It is too bad that he is not here to listen to her.

• (1530)

[Translation]

**Hon. Jeanne Sauvé (Minister of the Environment):** Mr. Speaker, I am very glad to have the opportunity to take part in the debate on second reading of Bill C-25, to protect human health and environment from substances that contaminate the environment. Hon. members will recall that when this bill was presented for second reading, I was in Victoria to attend a meeting of the council of environment and resources ministers and that I was unable to be present in the House. I wish to thank the parliamentary secretary for having replaced me and having so ably introduced the bill under consideration.

I would simply like to remind the House that this bill represents a very important step in the history of the challenges that we must meet as concerns the degradation of the environment, and even more important, as concerns the new development concepts that we must establish in modern society.

Mr. Speaker, with this bill, we enter the second generation of the environment policy, where we take preventive rather than corrective action. Because this was a new field, we had to start by repairing the damages that had been done to the environment and by eliminating the circumstances and situations caused by our activities on this planet. We also had to take emergency action to correct some of the damages caused to the environment, as well as to protect endangered species, of which we had just began to take notice, and also to make our environment healthier, since it is very important that man can go on living in an environment which can bring him all the satisfactions to which he is entitled.

Before bringing forth the bill, of course, we endeavoured to examine all instruments that are at our disposal to meet those new problems. We studied all existing laws to make sure that there would be no duplication in that field because we do have some instruments that fortunately allowed us to act. These are the Fisheries Act, the Clean Air Act, the Canada Water Act as well as some acts relating to the Department of National Health and Welfare which we have been able to invoke in some circumstances.

But today, we want to go further and fill the gaps in federal or provincial legislation because some circumstances arise in which, if we had to face really difficult

[Mr. Sharp.]

problems, we would not have any legislative instrument enabling us to act in an effective way. I need only recall the recent controversy about the effects of chlorinated water on human health.

Some scientists in the Mississippi area have started pointing out that there might be a certain link between the cancer rate in the Mississippi area and the fact that Mississippi waters are among the most polluted in the world even though Mississippi water is treated with chloride.

Mr. Speaker, every time something like that happens we should not go into a panic and immediately prohibit the use of these disinfectants to treat sewage water. Of course, we will have to face problems that are known to us and which are probably much more serious. In fact, if we have managed to get rid of typhoid fever because we now know how to disinfect our water we must still see to it as the years go by that we do not get into a situation where chlorinated water could be a probable cause of cancer.

Therefore, if this situation proves to be alarming, if our research, which is very rigorous, leads us to discover that chlorinated water is dangerous, we would have to find an instrument to control the level of concentration of this substance used to disinfect water. We would perhaps at least need instruments which would give us further knowledge of the chemical components of certain of these products. So, Mr. Speaker, with modern developments there are always new problems arising and governments which want to be modern need more and more refined instruments which will allow them to face these situations.

In brief, therefore, we would like to beef up certain federal and provincial laws and as far as possible we would also like to increase the efficiency of our present legislation.

The aim of Bill C-25 is to protect our health and environment against chemical substances which are judged to be dangerous or toxic. This bill will allow us to control concentration levels as it is obvious that certain substances are dangerous only if they are absorbed in sizeable quantities. That, for instance, is what goes on in the Mississippi region, where the concentration of those substances are constantly assessed for their toxicity and asep-sis. They are not toxic at certain levels but, absorbed in high enough quantities, they assuredly are. We should then control their level; it would not always be necessary to prohibit the use of those chemicals.

Mr. Speaker, this new bill must be passed because discoveries are made through research which is being done here and in other countries. We keep up to date with research being done throughout the world. The nature of some substances must be taken into account. We are beginning to discover that some of them do not disperse in the atmosphere, that some do not disintegrate. It is felt therefore that their accumulation might be harmful because, through that accumulation they could infiltrate the environment and become clear sources of contamination.

This new bill, Mr. Speaker, would therefore empower the government to require from all manufacturers, users and distributors, data on the composition of those chemi-