

*Policy Statement on National Resources*

performer ought to share at least equal responsibility for any impression that has been created by one or two statements that were made which I certainly would not retract but which, unrelated to the concern which had been expressed in respect of this problem, might have given the wrong impression.

• (4:10 p.m.)

The fact is that the Department of National Health and Welfare is fully aware of the serious problems presented by pollution of air and water in Canada and has two separate divisions devoted to the study and development of solutions to these problems. These divisions are located in the new environmental health centre which was completed in 1962. It has the most modern scientific facilities of this type in Canada and the laboratories compare favourably with any similar facilities in the world. The two divisions of this department work in close liaison with the provinces and provide technical and consultative services to assist in measuring pollution and designing necessary control techniques. This is done through research and collaboration in the development of design controls by officers of the department who maintain a very high level of technical competence in their own fields. They have benefited greatly from collaboration with their counterparts in the provinces.

I am sure we all appreciate the seriousness of the problems that air and water pollution pose not only for Canada but for almost every country in the world. Air pollution is now a common problem affecting cities in nearly every country of the world and is the result of human failure to realize that the atmosphere has a limited capacity to receive the impurities we have poured, and still continue to pour, into it. Not long ago we talked of air pollution in terms only of smoke and grime of factories, steam locomotives, and dirt and stench from industrial processes. Even these we were inclined to tolerate as a sign of our prosperity. These still exist but there are additional sources of pollution resulting from the operation of motor vehicles and airplanes, which have appeared on the scene in great and increasing numbers to add substantially to the problem of air pollution.

All of these sources, plus others of no small magnitude such as domestic heating plants, combine to add many tons of garbage to the air of any typical large city each day. You may recall that occasion in New York city on Thanksgiving week end in 1966 when 80

persons lost their lives as a result of pollution in the air. We all recall a similar incident in London in 1952 when a great number of deaths were caused by smoke and irritating fog. I believe that 4,000 persons lost their lives in London in 1952 and many other thousands were affected seriously as a result of this problem. Fortunately we have had no experience of that magnitude in Canada, and hopefully we will not have that problem at any stage in our future if we take the necessary steps to cope with the emerging problem of air pollution.

We all know that in our kind of society a certain amount of impurities will enter the atmosphere, and I think it would be very idealistic to expect the atmosphere of any large city to be country fresh. Of course we can depend to a certain extent upon the cleansing forces of the wind and rain because they do dilute and remove the airborne contaminants sufficiently fast to prevent an undue accumulation of consequent pollution problems. It is when the action of pollutants entering the atmosphere become so great and when the natural ventilating and cleansing processes of wind and rain are not in operation that we tend to have a problem and undesirable effects become noticeable. Sometimes, as in the case of Los Angeles, the local ventilation system provided by nature is not adequate to deal with the problem.

I say this as a background to a brief résumé of some of the immediate activities of my department in the field of air pollution and what hopefully we regard as a component of a national clean air act which is now under consideration. I might say that the air pollution work of the department is at present undergoing substantial development. Earlier this year we brought on the staff of the department, in order to improve our personnel, a person who has had a great deal of experience with the government of Queensland, Australia, in respect of this problem. He is now our consultant on air pollution in Canada.

One of the most important projects now in progress is the establishment for the first time in Canada of an effective national sampling program. The work of the provinces is being co-ordinated and actively supported where necessary with staff and facilities to assess the nature and extent of air pollution in all Canadian cities where problems may exist. The major purpose of these studies is to accumulate data which will enable standards of air quality to be established and maintained.