

*Motion for Papers*

seems logical that if Electric Reduction Company has been able to maintain the effluent within its own plant, reducing the phosphorus there and discharging clean or non-polluted water into the ocean, the same process could be used in other types of industrial operation. This would apply, for instance, to pulp mills, mining operations, concentrators and industrial plants from which chemicals and water are discharged, that is, waste and pollutants, at the same time.

Surely there is available to chemists and engineers the techniques with which to meet the demands of the biologists and ecologists. In this day and age the Department of Fisheries should be able to solve problems of pollution within its jurisdiction. The federal government should face its responsibilities and not hide behind the constitution in this regard. Today more and more people are interested in preventing pollution and preserving the products of nature. It is regrettable that our constitutional structure permits practically all levels of government to place the responsibility on others. We should not permit this type of constitutional buck-passing.

Unless we control pollution in our total environment and maintain a proper ecological balance, we will bring upon ourselves something far more destructive to humanity than atomic war, which is itself awesome and terrible. Many studies have been made, in isolation, in cases where the balance of nature has been upset by effluents, sewage, pollutants, detergents and many other industrial substances. These studies indicate that pollution is destructive of humanity. They also indicate it is very destructive of foodstuffs obtained from the ocean, which seems to be almost limitless in its capacity in this regard. It is nevertheless being destroyed piece by piece.

I do not want to go too far in this direction, Mr. Speaker, because the wording of the motion is rather confined. But the minister has raised an extremely important subject. He spoke of the necessity of having a Fisheries Act with teeth in it. I am sure the only opposition to this concept would come from vested interest groups such as some of the pulp companies in my province. There is a company in Prince Rupert, in my constituency, which has created havoc with the plant life in the area and which continues to pump effluent into the supposedly limitless food-bearing capacity of the ocean. We cannot permit this sort of thing. The Fisheries Act should be made, and efficient the minister

[Mr. Howard (Skeena).

will not find any great objection raised if he tries to plug the loopholes. When the minister mentioned this matter to the fisheries committee last spring, I thought he was talking in terms of the present session. There should be no delay in introducing this type of legislation so that the question can be dealt with in respect of both new and old operations.

● (5:40 p.m.)

The minister said that perhaps these companies react out of fear or self-defence; that the threat of punishment or a fine is sufficient to make them consult officials of the department. In many instances this is probably the major deterrent, and it is not a moralistic concern about our environment. I think that only the threat of some form of punishment will work. We need forceful and determined means of impressing upon these companies that they now operate industrial plants which are destructive of life forms. They must not dump fluids and chemicals into our oceans and freshwater systems. As the minister knows, they are destroying plant and animal life.

The minister, provincial governments and people in various political parties have said the only way to deal with these companies is to tell them, "You are doing something which is criminally wrong, in the broad sense of the word." A reasonable time limit must be set. If the engineers and the biologists in the minister's department feel that six months is an appropriate period of time, the government must say to these companies, "You have six months to clean it up. Put in pollution-control systems. We want pure water coming out the other end, or we will shut you down." This would be sad for the employees and the economy of the area, but if we do not take such steps, within 15, 20, 30 or 50 years we may well have destroyed human life.

We hear about the inability to find the millions of dollars necessary for pollution control. We cannot delude ourselves any longer about the inability to find the money. We simply have to find it. For all the good it does, we could in the interest of preserving humanity scrap the entire budget of the Department of National Defence and put the money into pollution control; we would be doing society and humanity a great deal more good than using it for the Department of National Defence. That is only an example. The money is available within the structure of government.