

Pollution Research

my comprehension to understand why this government has not taken a similar stand.

A few of our municipalities have begun to take steps to upgrade their efforts in this regard. Various industries, including the Packaging Association of Canada have begun to demonstrate greater concern with the problem. However, as the current chairman of the program, "Keep Canada Beautiful", referred to as KCB, a program of the Tourist Association, has pointed out:

"KCB has been made aware through its efforts that a spot by spot antilitter program is not enough. There is little sense in cleaning up one area when the region or area directly connected to it is without any kind of campaign. A national attack on litter is needed—one that stretches from one end of the country to the other with the support of the provinces and the Federal Government."

I wish to point out that the research and financial aspects are very important. I am concerned because the government has not at least moved in the same direction as the United States. As far as I have been able to determine, the federal government has done nothing in this field.

In the debate on this motion on February 2, 1970, the hon. member for Northwest Territories (Mr. Orange) referred to an advisory committee on public health engineering which was supposedly preparing a report on solid-waste disposal problems in Canada. According to the hon. member, this report was supposed to be available by the spring of 1970. My enquiries reveal this report has not even been started, yet alone completed. The report, on an area of such magnitude and importance, has not been started.

In conclusion, it would be most detrimental for this country if hon. members opposite agreed in principle with my sentiment, then lessened their credibility by talking out this motion. If a special committee on environmental pollution does not do anything else of significance, I hope it will refer to the February debate and the debate of this afternoon and accept *holus bolus* my motion as one of its recommendations.

Mr. P. M. Mahoney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, it may be some time before we get to the point of accepting *holus bolus* various recommendations of the hon. member. However, this is certainly one which we can look upon with sympathy and understanding. He has zeroed in on a problem that is well recognized. It is one of the major problems in our increasingly urbanized society.

One of the outstanding lessons in this century is that the capacity of our environment to decompose waste materials to harmless levels is not infinite. While the ability of the environment to assimilate our wastes is finite, the production of wastes is accelerating as we aspire to newer amenities and ways of life. We are rapidly overtaking the capacity of our environment to handle the waste that our way of life generates.

A diseased environment, such as results from the conditions described by the hon. member, means distress to all of us in a variety of ways. This extends beyond the

physical well-being of man. It proliferates into the psycho-social and economic realms, not to mention the delayed, subtle impact on the ecology of our earth which sustains human life as we know it today. Granting that human activities must result in residues, and granting that all these residues will not be useful, or capable of being decomposed by nature, there is a real need, as the hon. member has suggested, to define both the nature and the momentum of the danger facing our society, to identify existing and potential hazards, and to develop a strategy to control them.

• (5:20 p.m.)

It seems that humanity reacts to environmental hazards only when a crisis has been reached; we usually perceive the dangers of environmental pollution only when the hazards have become obvious through human illness, economic changes, obvious damage, or insults to aesthetic values which cannot be ignored. It is time we realized that the detrimental effects of environmental pollution are the ultimate distress signals and that the type of research which is recommended is necessary and highly desirable in order that these symptoms may be identified and suitable action taken before the failsafe stage is reached.

Some preliminary work has been done in the Department of National Health and Welfare, as the hon. member has mentioned, in the division of public health engineering, to identify the areas in which research might be properly undertaken. In view of the fact that the country is in transition from an agrarian to urban population, traditional approaches are becoming more obviously inadequate. The concentration of population in the urban communities and the upsurge in industrial development have accentuated the deterioration of our environment, for instance, by raising grave problems of waste disposal.

The Department of National Health and Welfare has recognized the urgent need to develop a system to protect the total environment. Such a system, it is proposed, should involve closely integrated studies of methods of preventing, controlling and abating the pollution of all the elements of the environment—air, water and soil. Attention is being paid to environmental contamination by solid wastes. The department has been provided with a lengthy series of recommendations concerning areas to which research might well be directed. I should like to record them at this time. Research needs are identified in terms of management and regulation of disposal practices, disposal methods and environmental effects. Under the first category, it is suggested there is need for:

1. Comparative evaluation of existing solid waste disposal regulations in Canada; the assessment of need for uniform regulations; and the development of standards and criteria.

2. Feasibility studies for the development of a mathematical model or systems approach to waste management with special reference to design and operation of disposal systems.

[Mr. Alexander.]