

*Water Resources Programs*

the minister to be charged with the oversight of environmental control measures. When his department was set up after the 1965 election, the Prime Minister of that day said it would bring together all the loose ends having to do with water resources and the control of water pollution—that this was the department to which responsibility for all these things would be assigned. It was intimated that though the initial responsibility would be primarily one of combatting water pollution it would eventually be broadened so as to include the whole environmental field. I applauded the setting up of the department at that time. I do not applaud many of the things the government does because, as a member of the opposition, it is not my job to do so. But on this occasion I thought the government had done something which was worthwhile, namely, to bring all these responsibilities under one minister.

Unfortunately, this did not happen. When the relevant legislation was passed, the minister was made responsible in general terms for only “those matters assigned to him”. So I began to direct questions to the Prime Minister about pollution matters. And on each occasion he replied: Wait until the Canada Water Act comes in and then you will have your answer. For a long time this was his stock reply to all questions on pollution control. Well, Mr. Speaker, we have had our answer now, and the answer is, “no”. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is to play only a limited role in pollution control.

As my hon. friend from South Western Nova (Mr. Comeau) has pointed out, the publicity which preceded the introduction of the Canada Water Act promised great things. Everyone reading it thought: At last we have what we have been looking for all these years; we have a Canada Water Act and all the responsibilities of the federal government will be placed under one department; at last the effort will be co-ordinated. This is exactly what we were led to believe by the publicity statements. However, when we take a close look at the bill we find we have been deceived. All the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources will be doing under this bill will be to co-ordinate a few little water policy management regions he has managed to set up. That is all. Some will be set up by agreement and others are to be set up unilaterally. I doubt, myself, whether these unilaterally established water quality management agencies will ever be set up. I doubt whether authority exists to constitute them. Indeed, I

doubt whether the government would take such action, even if it did have authority. I say this having observed the government's reaction to any constitutional or jurisdictional problems concerning which any question has been raised. Always they say: That is close to the line and we do not wish to infringe provincial jurisdiction. We thought this was going to be a co-ordinating act, but it is not.

• (4:00 p.m.)

Then, we thought that perhaps the government had just overlooked this point and was going to bring in an amendment to correct the oversight. We thought the government was going to say, as the hon. member for South Western Nova has so moved, that the minister would be responsible for co-ordinating the efforts of these departments; that he would be responsible for dealing with gaps that appear; that he would be responsible for co-ordination of provincial authorities, but would specifically make it clear that the minister would not be responsible for work or duties already assigned to other departments; nor was the minister to have any authority over matters exclusively assigned to the provinces.

The present amendment is not strongly worded, but I think it is the best we can do. We introduced two amendments, the second worded a little more strongly, but it was ruled out of order. This amendment is the next level down the scale, so to speak, and attempts to consolidate the efforts of the various departments under one minister. I cannot understand why the amendment was not accepted. Well, perhaps I can. Perhaps I was a little hasty in saying that I cannot understand why it was not accepted. I think the reason is that there is a division of jurisdiction between two or three departments, and none of them is willing to give up its own little piece of jurisdiction in the common good. I believe that that is the reason.

I do not think the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) has the fortitude to call his cabinet together and to tell them: “Somebody must be responsible for this matter and you fellows must quit bickering about who is the big shot with regard to pollution control”. I do not know who would want to be chief of pollution control in this country. Certainly, no minister has been designated minister of pollution control. Perhaps we would require a fancier title, such as minister of environmental control or something like that.