

Supply

was then that they discovered that indeed the great toxic blob had in fact not disappeared but, even worse, was now present in concentrations twice as high as had been true when it was discovered in 1984. Furthermore, it was not the easy form of octadioxin that the Minister talked about but the much more dangerous toxic and hazardous forms of tetradioxin, in heavier concentrations than had been true in 1984.

Yet, a whole year had passed without any action being taken to clean up that disaster. Finally, after a second test was conducted which showed these dangerous concentrations and after pushing and prodding, the federal Minister and Ontario Minister finally took action and a joint study was conducted. That joint study, unlike virtually any other study I have seen, did not come up with a set of conclusions. It came up with a set of questions. I strongly suggest to Members of the House that they read through the recommendations of this recent report on St. Clair River pollution investigations. They will find repeatedly that the recommendations do not give an answer to what needs to be done but recommend what should be investigated further. It states, for example, that we must investigate the Michigan site and the source of the dioxins and furans.

In short, the report in itself is not an answer but an action plan to find an answer. That is why the crucial question that faces the Government right now is what it will do about the 24 recommendations in this report. If it can tell the House of Commons today that it will follow up on every single recommendation as urgently, fully and comprehensively as necessary to find the answer, it will finally have taken the first step toward convincing those who care about the environment that it actually has that sense of urgency and commitment.

I want to talk briefly about the politics of this issue. Frankly, I have found it to be a political learning experience. It has been exciting to use information, sometimes gathered from unorthodox sources, and to pose questions effectively so that the Government will move to take an issue seriously, as I believe it has done with respect to the St. Clair River issue. My colleague says that the Government needed that kick in the butt to get at this concern.

However, there is another part of the politics of this issue that has also been fascinating, that is, to see the Conservative Members of Parliament who represent the areas which are sources of this pollution try to defend their localities. Surely it is possible, as indeed the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Nielsen) did today, for people to get up in the House and admit past mistakes. Surely it is possible for communities or companies to admit that they have not given the proper attention to pollution control.

Why was it necessary that the politics of this issue had to be raised by those Members who represent constituencies downriver from this pollution spill? It should have been Members of Parliament from the spill areas themselves who pushed this issue. Perhaps it is the nature of politics in our society that it is up to us in our communities downriver from these pollution crises to make the issue come alive and give it the drama which brings the attention that, in turn, builds the focus of

Government on the issue as a crucial question which must be dealt with and corrected.

We have a new report. It is a report which carries with it the urgency of this issue. It is a report which tells us in the communities downriver from the St. Clair that we can expect some reassurance from the Government that it will take our problems seriously. It is a report which must be acted upon. I ask the Government, the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and the Ministers responsible to take this report with the seriousness that it deserves. I ask them to see to it, in respect of the 24 recommendations in the report, that the possibility of underground sources of pollution is probed completely, and to see to it that the problems of fish in Lake St. Clair are studied as they deserve to be studied for the people of my constituency. Also I ask them to see to it that a year from today, instead of three of the 58 chemicals having standards for fish quality, all 58 have full standards for fish quality and for water quality, and that we have a sense of the cumulative impact of these different chemicals mixing together.

● (1740)

I should like to refer to our fight in Windsor. The Clean Water Alliance has been formed and met yesterday with 300 people to raise concerns about this issue. It is not only a fight for our selfish interests in the St. Clair River basin. It is a fight for change across the country to make pollution the urgent issue which it has to be. As our environment critic, the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Brids Hill (Mr. Blaikie), has made clear, it is a fight for a safe drinking water Act, for an environmental bill of rights, for speedy introduction of tough amendments to the Environmental Contaminants Act, and for a tough Canadian response to the refusal of the Environmental Protection Agency so far to act in the Niagara situation.

We must stop using our earth and our environment as a garbage can. We must, on a non-partisan basis throughout the House, make a commitment to our future and the future of our children. We must make this issue have the urgency it deserves as we head toward the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century.

Mr. Gurbis: Mr. Speaker, I assume the Hon. Member for Essex-Windsor (Mr. Langdon) was unable to hear the Minister's press conference in which he answered the specific questions that he asked. The report made 24 recommendations. The Minister in fact embraced the report and acted very specifically on three points which were made. In addition, he indicated a number of other specific Government actions.

Is the Hon. Member aware of the fact that the Department of the Environment has committed its full scientific and technical expertise to assist the Province of Ontario to implement the new limits on the effluents in order to control the toxic discharge? Second, the Department has already begun to improve water quality surveillance of the St. Clair River in order to get more accurate information on the amount of contaminant present in the river and to assess effectiveness of remedial action. Finally, the Department, under the Canada-United States upper Great Lakes connecting channels study,