

*The Address—Mr. Reid*

dropped by 25 per cent and a great many of them have ceased to fish. I would have had no objection to the government taking a step like this in the fall after the fishing season was over, but why in the name of sanity would the government do this in the middle of the fishing season? That is beyond my knowledge and I suspect it is probably beyond the knowledge of the ministers concerned, because while they speak pretty-sounding words about environmental pollution, the fact is that the government is not yet prepared to move. Therefore, society as a whole does not have to pay the penalty at this time, but only a few fishermen who are already living at the bottom of the economic margin. The government apparently is willing to see them pick up the full cost. Mr. Speaker, this is unjust as well as being stupid and unreasonable.

It is all right to speak of the dangers to the environment but there is another problem which has to be faced. That is the problem of these people who have been hurt by pollution through no fault of their own; in other words, the innocent bystanders must pay. It was not the fishermen who polluted the waterways, it was not the tourist industry which polluted the waterways, and it certainly was not the Indians who depend upon fishing for their living and income.

What are the alternatives? We have ministers from both the Ontario government and the federal government going around saying to these people, "You can sue the polluters." These are supposed to be intelligent men. I am not a lawyer, Mr. Speaker, but lawyers tell me that anybody who is stupid enough to think that a small fisherman or tourist camp operator could sue a polluter, that he would have the resources to go that far, is ignorant of the law and especially of law practice.

It seems to me there is a definite role for society to play, acting through governments, to compensate people who are affected by pollution. I do not refer only to mercury pollution, because as we examine our environment I am sure we will find there are other substances which are polluting it. Other people, equally as innocent as fishermen and tourist camp operators, will be affected. I believe the government should be working on a policy to provide some form of compensation to them. It is unjust to allow the whole burden of pollution to fall upon marginal producers of various items when the responsibility clearly is not theirs, when they did not cause the pollution but are being asked to pay the whole price.

I would now like to say a few words about the way in which Indians living along polluted waterways were affected. First of all, Mr. Speaker, they were wiped out of commercial fishing. This was not so important to them as a cash crop, but it was important as a means of supporting themselves, as a means of combating lack of jobs and lack of other income. Now they have been told they can no longer fish commercially. Their traditional fishing grounds have been eliminated from their use. Furthermore, they have been informed by officials of the provincial department of lands and forests that on no account

are their women to touch mercury-polluted fish because mercury tends to concentrate in the foetus.

We have eliminated their traditional source of food. We have increased their cost of living. We have eliminated a certain amount of their cash income from fishing. We have also destroyed another source of income which they had, outside some logging and lumbering. That income was from the tourist industry. Work in the tourist camps may not seem important to many people, but in northwestern Ontario it accounts for 10 per cent of the available jobs. You cannot eliminate these big employers of men in one step and not produce a detrimental effect.

What should the federal government be doing in these cases? The Indians do not understand the concept of compensation for something they have lost. To them it is just another form of government welfare. Those who wish to improve themselves, who wish to go out and work in the tourist camps, now have this opportunity denied them; and there is no evidence that the government is prepared to move in some way and provide assistance for these people. Ministers of government are still sitting on the bottom of their big, round, stuffed chairs waiting for the problem to disappear.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot provide what we have taken away from the Indian people, which is a way of life and a way of adjustment into the society which has grown up around them. We have destroyed that, and nothing we do can compensate for it. The Indians know this. We can go to other people and buy them out, compensate them, and they will understand. But the Indians do not understand it. When we consider what we have taken away from the Indian we, too, know we cannot compensate him and we know the Indian is quite right.

I would like to say a few words in more detail about the plight of the tourist camp operators and of the people who normally sought employment from them. As I said before, Mr. Speaker, fishing is the basis of the tourist industry in northwestern Ontario. Now that we have taken away the use of fish from a great part of the region, in effect we have destroyed these people's capital investment and the legitimate return through profits that they might have expected—and this all in one blow. We have provided no compensation for them.

I am prepared to admit that the regulation of the tourist industry is probably a provincial affair. Certainly the province issues tourist camp licences. But this is an industry that lives off fish, which is a federal responsibility. It is something the federal government cannot ignore, particularly when one notices that in this case pollution flows from my constituency into the province of Manitoba. The mercury also flows into the province of Manitoba from the Assiniboine River through Saskatchewan. It is quite apparent that no federal government can hide behind the pretext that this is a matter of provincial responsibility, because it just won't wash.

What happened to the tourist camp industry in my area, Mr. Speaker? I can give two examples. Perhaps the largest and most expensive camp, after a careful survey to decide whether its guests would come as normal,