

*Environmental Contamination*

the Department of Public Works, on behalf of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, contracted to carry out some work in the Northwest Territories. A private firm was engaged to move equipment to the site and commence the work. There was some delay because of floods and transportation problems, so by the time the contractor got to the site the Department of the Environment had decided not to issue an environmental permit. Subsequently, through the Department of Public Works and the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, the work was cancelled. Then, it was discovered that the contractor had to be compensated for the cost of bringing his equipment on site. However, due to the fact that there was a delay, not of a year or of six months or of three weeks, but of two days, by a technicality it was decided that he did not have to be compensated. Had he been on the site at the specified time, he would have had to be compensated but because he was two days late, there was this loophole.

I point this out, Mr. Speaker, three departments of government were involved and yet we put the onus on industry to protect itself. I ask, against what are we asking industry to protect us? Surely it is the responsibility of the federal government, in conjunction with provincial governments, to provide guidelines with respect to substances which are polluting our air, water and environment. Such guidelines are not now in existence. It is easy to provide for anti-pollution equipment when a plant is in the planning stage. If there are guidelines with respect to pollution levels, they can be applied at the stage where the feasibility of a new plant is being considered, and then they can budget for equipment. It becomes almost impossible to plan with respect to pollution control if you are not planning on the basis of known factors. I know the minister is concerned about this.

● (1520)

When the bill is in committee I hope members will work with diligence to work out some solution to this difficulty. I know it cannot be done overnight, as the problem is complex. We must arrive at some solution so that we can provide business and industry with guidelines in this area. When introducing the bill yesterday, the minister said several times that he strongly favours prevention as opposed to cure. To my mind strict guidelines are the first preventive measure which ought to be considered in dealing with this serious problem.

Having said this, I assure the minister that my colleagues on this side welcome the bill. We should have liked to see it long ago, but, nonetheless, we will co-operate in every way possible to pass the measure. Efforts will be made on our behalf to move amendments. The minister invited comments and amendments to this bill. I know he will co-operate when they are advanced.

**Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris):** Mr. Speaker, I will not unduly delay the progress of this bill which is of sufficient importance to warrant broad discussion at this stage of our deliberations. The concept of controlling and managing the environment is of fairly recent origin. Members who have spoken in the debate so far have said how pleased they are to note the initiative taken by the govern-

[Mr. Oberle.]

ment in taking this further step in dealing with the problems connected with the environment.

In his statement yesterday the minister emphasized that the purpose of the bill is preventive, that it anticipates the possible contamination of man's environment. He said that it also deals with a broader concept, the protection of human health. The hon. member for Lambton-Kent (Mr. Holmes), who spoke on the bill yesterday, dealt in detail with the health aspects of the bill and about problems which flow from contamination. I do not need to report what he said.

As the minister has included in the bill a concept for protecting human health from contaminants, I hope he realizes how broad are the dimensions of what is implied. If such an idea is to be effective, we shall need legislation much more comprehensive than that represented by Bill C-3 which is now before us.

May I comment briefly on the object of prevention. Although it is desirable to make sure that man does not further unnecessarily contaminate his environment with man-made contaminants, particularly through the growth of the synthetic industry, I need hardly remind the minister that we cannot arrest the problem at this stage with legislation like this. This legislation, which it is hoped will prevent man from further contaminating his environment through his own pollutants, hardly deals with the broader aspects of the problem.

Yesterday the minister said, justifiably, that he will require lots of advice if he is to come to grips with this difficulty. He expressed the hope that advisory councils, both formal and ad hoc, will be sufficient to keep him, the department and the government fully posted on the broad implications of the question.

That brings me to the first point of my brief contribution today. There has been in existence since 1962 an advisory council which, I think, will be one of our most useful tools for dealing with environmental pollution in future, as anticipated in the bill, and for dealing with some of the broader aspects of the problem yesterday outlined by the hon. member for Lambton-Kent. I am referring to the resource ministers council which has been in operation for the past 12 years. That council is a purely advisory body. It cannot be given executive responsibility because the area of resources, particularly renewable resources like air and water with which the present bill is designed to deal, is an area of joint jurisdiction. Responsibility lies somewhere between federal and provincial administrations.

All governments have failed to come to grips with pollution, partly because it has been difficult to know where specific areas of responsibility lie. That is one of the difficulties of life in a federal state. Here is a ready made advisory council which is based in one of our major cities, Montreal. It has been in existence for the past 12 or 13 years. Its purpose is to advise the federal government and provincial levels of government on the broad implications of pollution, particularly environmental pollution, and to recommend legislative solutions. The resource ministers council will make this broader examination possible, as it is involved with the private sector of the Canadian economy.