

Water Resources

could have been used for pollution control. Hon. members know they have been almost totally ignored. I wish to give several examples of this: we have the Fisheries Act, the Navigable Waters Protection Act, the National Harbours Board Act, the Migratory Birds Convention Act, the National Health Act and a number of others. Each act has a set of regulations that could and should be taking care of the pollution problems facing this nation. In addition to these acts, there are about 14 government departments directly involved in the problems of pollution. However, action by them has been totally lacking. They have been ineffective because of the lack of government initiative. If we get from the Canada Water Act the same results that we have had from the enforcement of the acts already on our statute books, our pollution problems will remain unchecked. We have the power to check pollution, but that power has seldom been used.

● (8:40 p.m.)

The federal government prefers to pass the buck to the provincial and municipal authorities. The question I should like to leave with the minister is: Where do the government departments now fit into the pollution picture? Has the co-ordinating committee been set up? What about the regulations we already have and the various acts covering a variety of government departments? How do they fit into solving Canada's pollution problems?

A very interesting article appeared in the *Globe and Mail* of last August, written by the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Davis). In his opinion there was virtually no body of water anywhere in Canada under either federal or provincial jurisdiction which did not come within the provisions of the Fisheries Act. He suggested in the article that one or two minor changes might be made, but that the Department of Fisheries was the logical department to deal with water pollution. This suggestion has been ignored. I find myself wondering how the Fisheries Act fits in with the pollution legislation now proposed.

I intend to read one or two excerpts from this article because I think they should be placed on the record. I shall not read the whole of the article because it is too lengthy. I will start with the part dealing with pulp mills, which is as follows:

Canada's No. 1 chemical process industry is busy putting its own house in order. Let us hope that other chemical-type industries will follow suit:

[Mr. Harding.]

But why focus on pulp and paper? The reason, in quantitative terms, is obvious. We have no less than 170 pulp mills in this country. They use up more than 80 per cent of all the water consumed by industry in Canada. Also they are responsible for dumping well over half of all the decomposable material thrown into our water courses each year. No wonder that we in the Fisheries and Forestry Department in Ottawa are concerned about the pulp and paper industry and the way it is dealing with its pollution problem.

The article continues:

The Fisheries Act, must, of course, be applied uniformly across the country.

The minister is calling for uniform standards across Canada. The article goes on:

New plants should be up against uniform standards wherever they locate. They must be up against the same laws and the same regulations. Otherwise they will be able to seek out the provinces which have poorer standards and exploit their pollution laws.

He is pointing out, with crystal clarity, what we should be doing—the very opposite of what this bill proposes. He goes on to say, as reported in this article:

Pollution abatement, of course, costs money. And in order to escape these costs new industry has a tendency to go to those places where it can use our fish-bearing rivers as a dumping ground. This must be stopped and the uniform application of the Fisheries Act can be very helpful in this regard.

He then makes other points. I shall read a little further on in the article:

Our Fisheries Act can, of course, stand improvement. It should include clauses which are anticipatory in nature. And with these amendments, we will no longer have to find dead fish in order to prove our case. We will no longer have to wait until the damage is done to our waters.

The point the minister is making very clearly is that we must insist on uniform standards Canada-wide. What do we get in this bill? Regional bodies are to be set up in the various river basins and will set their own standards. The result will be a hodge-podge of different standards from one end of Canada to the other.

Mr. Gibson: The water is not the same.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Harding: This is one of the weaknesses of the present bill.

Mr. Gibson: You will not strengthen it.

An hon. Member: Look at your own water in Hamilton.

Mr. Harding: Other things have been done by this government. A cabinet decision passed