

Pollution Control

This problem which is of great interest to all hon. members has not only been mentioned in the House on many occasions, but has also been referred to the committee which is presently studying Bill C-144.

Though the release recommends that measures be taken with regard to the use of phosphates, it does not give any details with regard to such measures. We hope that the minister and the senior officials of his department will, within the committee, succeed in establishing a program and in determining the measures they intend to take.

The public can certainly and rightly ask that those products be taken off the market. The government is taking the very measures Ontario has already taken to ban the sale of such substances.

It is my opinion that the committee will be extremely interested in delving further into this matter.

[English]

Mrs. Grace MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, we in this party welcome most heartily the announcement of the minister today, particularly as it comes in advance of the International Joint Commission meeting in Brockville. It seems as though the government is doing a great deal. I commend the minister for having made public some of the things that the government is apparently doing because I firmly believe an informed public can and will support anti-pollution measures. This might not be the case if the public were kept in the dark.

I was pleased to hear that there have been discussions and that these discussions are continuing with the United States authorities, particularly with regard to the Great Lakes. Obviously this is essential so far as the Great Lakes are concerned.

We in this party feel that the Canadian government should take the initiative with regard to our waterways, lakes and coastal waters which do not come within joint jurisdiction. The federal government must take the initiative with regard to pollution of these waters and not wait until such time as there can be agreement with the United States authorities on an over-all program. I was pleased to learn that the minister caused his officials to go to Sweden to ascertain what is being done in that country, and also to discuss with a major United States detergent producer the development of phosphate alternatives.

[Mr. Comeau.]

We in this party are not sanguine with regard to the minister's opinion that perhaps voluntary action will achieve the desired result. We believe there will have to be definite target dates set not only for the reduction but also the elimination of phosphates. I know the minister referred to elimination as soon as is practicable. But this will not be hastened along without a good deal more effort than the hon. gentleman is putting into it now. I hope the minister is getting the kind of mail I am receiving these days—worried protests from women all across Canada who will not be satisfied to be told to go back to soap or to find out which detergent already on the market contains the least amount of phosphate. They want the government to arrange for the kind of research which will enable us to eliminate phosphate detergents completely.

We welcome the minister's announcement and urge him to continue the good work he is doing.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilbert Rondeau (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, the minister's statement, this morning, shows good intentions concerning pollution control. We have unfortunately had little time to study the document he tabled in the House, as we have just seen it.

Nevertheless, reading the first page of the statement, we see the government has good intentions in connection with control of water pollution, aiming to eliminate the use of chemicals such as phosphates as much as possible. However, one passage of the text surprises me. In effect, the minister says he will initiate discussions with a major United States detergent producer.

We know now that phosphates and soaps are the main factors of water pollution. What results can the minister expect from discussions with phosphate and soap producers if he wants to check pollution caused by the use of these products? In preparing his policy, I think he should instead consult scientists, who would likely recommend using biodegradable products which do not pollute water at all. He should confer with people who are not directly involved in phosphate or soap production or sales in order to be able to take measures likely to fight efficiently water pollution in Canada.

The minister has pointed out that the co-operation of businessmen involved should be voluntary. However, the problem of pollution is so acute in Canada now that we should do more than merely ask those who have been