

Clean Air Act

various receptors—man, vegetation, wildlife and so on. As our technology advances and as society continues to inject enormous quantities of waste into the air, soil and water environment we must be ever more alert to potential hazards. We must therefore, ensure that we are before the fact in respect of our research. We must anticipate. We must make sure we are heading off emergency situations and not dealing with them after they occur.

• (12:20 p.m.)

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we believe that the public's concern, combined with industry's new awareness of its responsibilities, will lead to enthusiastic compliance with the major provisions in this bill. But we must have methods to ensure its compliance. Thus, there are inspection provisions and substantial fines incorporated in the text of Bill C-224 as well. If the bill stopped there, I think we could say that it was a good piece of legislation, but one essential element would be missing. I do not believe that this or any other government has the right to impose pollution controls on industry and the ordinary citizen unless it is prepared to live by the same rules. Bill C-224 makes clear this government's intention to put its own house in order, to make sure that federal establishments meet our national standards and exceed them by a considerable margin wherever possible.

This brief outline of the provisions of the bill will be expanded when the bill comes before the standing committee. I hope that at that time a number of our officials will be available, especially those who have not only helped to develop the text of this act but who have also had considerable experience working with our provinces, municipalities and industries over the years.

In my opening remarks on the new government organization bill recently, I stressed the interdependence of life forms on this planet. I said that there was little sense in shutting off air pollution emissions from a factory stack, only to find that they were being dumped into the river or plowed into the soil. Within our new department, whatever its name may be, we will be taking an over-all approach to pollution. We will have the technical expertise to deal with it in all its forms.

In summary, I believe that our main problem is to deal with man and his habits, essentially with man's greed for material gain. This is really at the root of our environmental problem. Psychologists tell us that man has a hierarchy of needs ranging upward from those associated with basic survival, through security needs and social needs, eventually to recreational needs. It is ironic that our interest in air pollution control begins at the top of the scale, essentially with a concern by the general public for aesthetics, people who can no longer enjoy the view of Mount Royal from Sherbrooke Street or Grouse Mountain from Hastings Street in Vancouver. But now our concern is related to our most basic needs.

This bill focusses more directly on human health and indeed survival. The bill will provide us with the frame-

[Mr. Davis.]

work and the mechanism to carry out this fight for our survival. It warrants the support of all Canadians, and it certainly warrants the support of members from all corners of the House. I hope we can clear second reading of the bill this afternoon and get on to the detailed committee stage of the bill in the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Forestry next week.

Mr. Louis-Roland Comeau (South Western Nova): I welcome the speech which was delivered by the minister in the House, a copy of which was sent to us by the officials of the department. I want to say at the outset, so that I will be understood immediately, that members of this party accept the principles and objectives stated in the bill. I will have some questions to raise to which I hope we will receive answers, perhaps on second reading. Possibly we will be able to receive more answers in the committee. However, we do accept the broad principles, or at least the objectives, which the government is trying to achieve through the bill before us.

One thing that concerns me is that the bill was introduced in the House and given first reading on February 9. Today is February 19, so exactly 10 days have elapsed since the introduction of the bill. This means that the opposition members and the public have been given only a few days to examine the bill and to form an opinion on it. This is typical of this government which talks about participatory democracy and yet allows only 10 days to investigate such an important subject and to consult with the provinces and municipalities. Perhaps this government has had a chance to consult with the other levels of government. Certainly, they have had time to do this since 1967 when the necessity for a clean air act was first made obvious.

But so far as members of the opposition and of the general public are concerned, we have only had 10 days to look at the proposed legislation and to analyse it objectively. We do not know what the feelings of the city of Montreal are with regard to the bill. Only one editorial has appeared on this subject. I have looked through all the newspapers in the reading room and that is all I have been able to find. As I said, we have been waiting for this type of legislation for three years, and now we are only given 10 days to examine it. This only points to the fact that the government does not have a plan for the legislation they propose to put forward this year. This is an obvious deduction from the fact that three or four bills have been placed before the House only a week after their introduction. I object to that practice very strongly.

We should have been given much more time to study this measure. If the government had been really anxious to introduce a bill to cope with this problem, they could have introduced it last September because they have had three years during which to prepare this legislation. Today, it is urgent that a clean air bill be implemented. However, let me remind the House that we have been pressing for it for three years, and now we are given only one week in which to prepare our comments on it. It is a darn shame that the government has not planned its