

Request for Environmental Council

recommended by the IJC. I wish the minister had told us something about this project, which would have had tremendous beneficial impact upon the lives of people living around the Great Lakes—a very substantial section of the Canadian population, I might add. We have a duty to maintain our heritage of fresh water in the Great Lakes. The minister should tell us, if he can, why the President vetoed this project, whether his veto is likely to be withdrawn and what the Canadian government is doing in an attempt to get a different answer.

There is one other aspect of this question with which I should like to deal. A lot of the air pollution we experience arises from the burning of garbage. It is the view of experts, and my own view too, that the solution lies in recycling garbage and using it for industrial purposes. We are planning an experimental plant in the area of Toronto. It will be a municipal plant but to some extent it will have to be supported financially by the Department of the Environment. I plead with the minister to give sympathetic consideration to schemes of this sort. If it can be shown that they work they could constitute a major contribution to the ending of air pollution.

I do not know whether my time is about to expire but I should like to refer to a speech which the minister made on March 16, 1971. I thought I had the *Hansard* report with me but I cannot immediately locate it. However, it was reported in the press at the time that the government would aid city garbage disposal. The press report reads:

Jack Davis, Minister of the Environment designate, told the Commons committee on fisheries and forestry that many cities cause air pollution by burning their garbage and once the proposed clean air act is passed the federal government will be in a position to help. The federal government likely will conduct research into ways of disposing of solid wastes without burning them, he said. Knowledge from such studies will be of great help to cities such as Toronto—

• (1740)

Somewhere else the minister said the government would be ready to assist in the financing of experimental projects in this field, to show what could be done to transform the waste of modern civilization into something useful instead of having it burned and thus put into the atmosphere as a pollutant and health hazard to people living in the cities.

As I have said, this subject has international, national and constitutional implications. It also has extremely important local implications. When the minister took on this job more than a year ago I wished him good luck. I hope that all energy and vigour will be put into the enforcement of regulations. It is easy to set up standards. It is relatively easy to make reports and speeches on the subject. What is difficult and will require a tremendous amount of social, legal and governmental effort is the adequate enforcement of regulations that are made.

I know the minister was not feeling very well today and was able to be in the House for only a short time, but I commend to him the fact that people all over the country are concerned that the work of his department be fully effective so we can be saved from the scourge of the pollution of our environment.

[Translation]

Mr. Eymard Corbin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, as I listened this afternoon to the speeches of other hon. members, especially that of the mover of the motion (Mr. Harding), I noted that mention was made of almost every pollution problem under the sun and that there was no particular discourse on the text of the motion. That may have been a useful exercise, since we have already had, during the debate on various legislative proposals made by the government and adopted by this House, the opportunity of making a detailed study of those excellent measures, and it would be superfluous to come back to them today.

The previous speaker deplored the fact that the Minister of Environment (Mr. Davis) did not have enough time to speak about the important question of the United Nations Conference on Human Environment which is to be held in Stockholm from June 5 to June 15, 1972.

Mr. Speaker, I have indirectly been involved in preparations for this conference, especially since September when the minister asked me to attend to a national advisory committee in conjunction with the conference. I may be able to give information that might satisfy the hon. member who brought up the matter.

We have indeed set up an advisory committee of 50 members, on which the provincial governments are represented especially through their deputy ministers responsible for pollution and the quality of the environment. This committee also includes representatives of various spheres of national interest, for instance, industry, the natives of the country, the Indians, the Inuits as well as representatives of various citizens' groups which deal in matters pertaining to the environment, and those of the scientific community in general.

To carry out productive work, the number of members obviously had to be limited. Otherwise, we should have spent whole sessions just trying to conciliate different opinions. We feel we have been successful in setting up a committee representative of vast national interests.

So far, we have held two meetings, at the beginning of December and early this year and we intend to hold a third one next week.

The advisory committee's terms of reference are to suggest means whereby the participation of the people of Canada in the preparation of the Stockholm conference may be brought about, and particularly to incite the submission of suggestions as to the position to be adopted by the Canadian government.

We did not merely hold sessions of the committee, which includes some 50 members, Mr. Speaker. We solicited and obtained the committee's agreement to hold public hearings in all Canadian provinces, to which representatives of all sectors of the nation concerned with and interested in environment issues are invited.

These public hearings will begin in Vancouver on April 5 and the last one will be held in Winnipeg around May 5. During that period, we shall visit all the provinces, including the northern territories.