

Water Resources Programs

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member is not even in his seat. If he is going to raise a point of order, he should at least be in his seat.

An hon. Member: He does not know the rules.

Mr. Hees: I could not wait, Mr. Speaker. It is too exciting.

Mr. Comeau: I can assure you it is exciting Mr. Speaker. This was supposed to be the major bill dealing with pollution bill. The minister attended two committee sittings but did not attend yesterday's sitting of the House, so today I am glad to see him.

I read yesterday that there was going to be a cabinet shuffle and some of these ministers were going to be shifted around. Maybe the Parliamentary Secretary is looking for a new job. I wish him well.

Mr. Baldwin: "The minister in charge of pollution".

Mr. Comeau: To return to what I was saying, Mr. Speaker, the unanimous report of the National Resources and Public Works Committee recommended that the government draft a code of standards for the cleaning up and future protection of all Canadian waters. The hon. member for Northwest Territories (Mr. Orange) who is now the Parliamentary Secretary to the minister, was on that committee and participated in drafting our report. Maybe it was he who suggested that this be included in the recommendations. In committee, however, while defending the government's idea that we should not have a national standard for a particular class of water, he completely ignored the suggestion of May 30, 1969, which he had made to the committee.

If I had a list of the constituencies of the other members of the committee I would name them, but I know that practically all those who were on the committee last year are on it again this year. Last year they recommended national standards but this year they say, "Oh, no, we have to defend the minister because the minister said we should not have national standards." It makes you wonder. Sometimes you hear the opposition talking about the usefulness of some of these committees, but instances like these really make you wonder just how useful committees are. This is a unanimous report; everyone supported it.

[Mr. Hees.]

• (4:50 p.m.)

Last week a committee to deal with environmental pollution was set up. We are told that this is one of the most important committees that has ever been set up by Parliament. Well, the government is playing politics with this subject, because that committee will probably bring in a recommendation similar to the one to which I just referred. It will make all sorts of recommendations, but they will not be accepted. That committee has only one month in which to sit before the summer recess. Unquestionably, as I said, it will make recommendations and look at air pollution, various standards, etc., etc. There are standards now in Montreal; there are standards now in Toronto. As I said before, we do not say that the same standard should apply to Hamilton harbour and Lake Louise; only that similar bodies of water across the country should be controlled by similar standards. For instance, the standard applying to lakes or waters used for recreational purposes should be the same in every province of Canada.

The last paragraph of the amendment reads as follows:

(2) No person shall deposit or permit the deposit of waste in any waters in Canada that fall below the minimal water quality standard established for those waters under subsection (1); violation of this subsection shall be deemed to be an offence and punishable under section 22.

In other words, the amendment says that no body of water shall be allowed to fall below the set minimum standard. This afternoon we have talked of conflict in Canada, and how everyone wants to be a hero in pollution matters. The Minister of Fisheries takes great pride in his work in the fisheries; the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources wants to become the great hero in the battle against pollution.

Mr. Hees: The absent hero.

Mr. Comeau: My hon. friend says, the absent hero. The bill the Minister of Fisheries piloted through the House was a strong bill which set standards. Yet, while that minister suggests certain standards, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is opposed to them. The standards of the Minister of Fisheries are simple. He says, "Allow the fish to live in the waters of Canada." That is the standard. He says that once pollution reaches the point where the fish begin to die, you must stop. His standard has been very effective, because he says that when fish begin to die something must be done. That is a basic and very essential standard.