

Water Resources

During the month of November 1969, I had the opportunity to consult with the Quebec Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, with the Quebec Minister of Game and Fisheries, as well as with the federal Minister of Fisheries and Forestry (Mr. Davis).

It was about the problem of water pollution in the St. Lawrence river. Indeed, a fisherman of the Lotbinière riding used to catch two eels a day on average after having invested \$5,000 in fishing equipment. This situation is common in my riding.

When this problem is referred to various governments, because it has water pollution as a direct cause, they claim, in view of the bureaucratic and jurisdictional intricacies, that it is not their responsibility.

I would say that Bill C-144—and that may be its greatest failure—will not bring a solution to this problem. In order to call the attention of the minister to this matter, I will read a letter of the Quebec Associated Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry, Mr. Maurice Lessard, dated November 10, and I quote:

• (9:50 p.m.)

The Department of Tourism, Game and Fisheries has referred to us your letter of October 20 concerning the fishermen of your constituency plagued with water pollution.

Water pollution is a major problem with which all governments are concerned; these last years, pieces of legislation have been introduced at all levels to control that plague and counteract its ill effects. However, some time will have to elapse before we can see their beneficial effects.

This means that the inconvenience about which the fishermen of the Lotbinière constituency complain are similar to that suffered by a very great number of fishermen in the province of Quebec. We deplore such a situation, but no legislation at the present time provides for assistance to offset the inconvenience that you outline.

I was then inquiring about the provincial government policy on water pollution and as can be seen, I did not get any reply.

I had also written to the Quebec minister of Tourism, game and Fisheries but I will not put the reply on record. However, I should like to call the members' attention to the other side of the picture, that is, what the federal government thinks about the problem. I have in my hand a letter from the minister of Fisheries and Forestry, dated August 14, 1969, and I quote:

Sir:

I acknowledge receipt of your letter of July 14th expressing your concern about the fishermen and the fish likely to be affected by the pollution of the St. Lawrence, from Montreal to Quebec.

Unfortunately I must remind you that under an agreement, fisheries management in Quebec comes under the jurisdiction of the province, more speci-

[Mr. Fortin.]

fically under the Department of Tourism, Fish and Game.

In the event that such steps as you suggest should be taken, they will no doubt be prepared by that department.

Yours sincerely,
Jack Davis

According to the two ministers, this seems to close the matter. What do we see? The problem is still there and dead fish litters all the shores of the St-Lawrence. Moreover, swimming is prohibited. The water stinks. Our great river, one of Canada's matchless resources, has become a national disgrace.

Neither the provincial nor the federal government tries to find a global and joint solution, as the minister put it, to solve the problem. They pass the buck and say: This does not come under our jurisdiction, this is the responsibility of such and such government.

The minister claims that Bill C-144 will solve the problem.

I have here a communiqué issued by the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, which is entitled: A new Water Act designed to unravel the bureaucratic and jurisdictional maze.

What a problem! The department acknowledges itself the problem to such an extent that it set it forth in a press release.

It reads in part as follows:

Hon. Otto E. Lang, the minister responsible for energy and water resources, has stated that the proposed Canada Water Act just announced by the government is aimed at unravelling the bureaucratic and jurisdictional maze which so far has stifled all initiatives concerning control over pollution and conservation.

What high-sounding words to say nothing!

The people of Canada are increasingly worried by the failure to undertake a long term project and by the lack of co-operation at all levels of government.

The release continues, and I quote:

The federal government must take the initiative, in a concerted action—

I dare anyone to find in Bill C-144 the excerpt which elaborates what the minister means by "take the initiative", and "a concerted action".

Under cover of a new piece of legislation, and with the help of the huge publicity machine, Canadians will be made to believe that the pollution problem is settled at last.

Also, we shall be made to believe that the provincial governments are in this fight till the end and that, right now, there is no longer any co-operation problem. Now, you will note that in the preamble—and this is