

*Water Resources Programs*

I see that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Greene) is now in the House. I should like to take the opportunity provided by this discussion to draw his attention once again to the urgent necessity for consultation because it is my view that unless appropriate provision for consultation is spelled out in legislative form, the terms of Bill C-144 as they now stand will fail to deal with the problem of securing adequate co-operation between the government in Ottawa, the provincial governments and the private agencies which will be affected by any particular governmental action. I know that the minister has been closely involved in all the intergovernmental as well as the intragovernmental discussions which have gone on over a long period in order to make it possible to bring the Canada water bill, before the House. Unfortunately, it has taken longer than has been in the best interests of coming to grips with the water pollution crisis, mainly because of the difficulties of getting agreement between the various levels of government and also, as we have noted during the various stages of the discussion, between different departments of the federal government which have responsibility for the control of renewable resources.

It was in 1961 at the Conference on Resources for Tomorrow that urgent action to deal with water pollution in particular was strongly recommended. Here we are, nine years later. The situation has worsened because of government inaction and we are still discussing a bill designed to come to grips, legislatively, at least, with this problem.

I trust the minister will speak on the amendment because I feel he has a positive interest in the successful operation of this bill. It seems to me that co-operation with the provincial governments in particular on a voluntary basis has to be assured. Spelling out the arrangement in detail as required by the amendment appears to me as a desirable thing. The Parliamentary Secretary has told us that consultation and co-ordination are necessary. He also told us that this course has been followed in all preliminary discussions. Why, then, does the government refuse to enshrine in the bill its dedication to the important principle of intergovernmental consultation? Why will it not provide an assurance to the private sector of the economy that it will similarly be consulted? The machinery for doing so certainly exists. The Resource Ministers Council meets regularly. So there is no problem about finding a political structure

within which the necessary consultation could be carried out. It is also possible to reach beyond the jurisdiction of the government and consult with the industries which will be concerned in these decisions. This can be done through the permanent secretariat which is the operational arm of the Resources Council.

The Parliamentary Secretary referred to consultation which went on over a period of some six years in order to bring the three prairie provinces together in a joint effort to bring into being the Prairie Water Conservation Council. The governments of the prairie provinces are most reasonable governments. They are concerned about the conservation and development of renewable resources. As one who was involved in these discussions with the prairie provinces I can say that it was of the utmost importance to ensure the provincial premiers and resource ministers concerned that the federal government had no ulterior motive in bringing forward its proposition to make possible the co-ordinated development of the water resources of the prairie region. If a difficulty of this kind arose in the case of the prairie provinces it would be infinitely more likely to arise, for example, in discussions with the two central provinces of Ontario and Quebec when it came to an attempt to call forth a co-ordinated effort in the field of resource management.

It should be elementary to everyone serving in this House that resources belong to the provinces under the constitution. The provinces exercise very jealously their constitutional rights in this regard. From my own experience it would not be sufficient just for the Parliamentary Secretary to reassure the House in the course of parliamentary debate that this consultation will take place. It will be of the utmost importance to spell it out in the actual terms of reference of Bill C-144, and I think the amendment moved by the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka does this very concisely and precisely.

● (5:20 p.m.)

I urge the minister of resources and members supporting the government, when this matter comes to a vote, to ensure the effectiveness of this legislation by assuring all parties concerned that the motives of the federal government in this particular regard are clearly spelled out in legislative form. Otherwise, all the work that has gone into the preliminary discussions making possible the presentation of a Canada Water Act, even at