

Northern Inland Waters Bill

amendment made by the Senate to Bill C-187, respecting inland water resources in the Yukon Territory and Northwest Territories.

Mr. Aiken: Mr. Speaker, I have some comments to make but before I do so, on a point of order I wonder if the minister would explain why we are considering this amendment at this time.

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, it is just a technical amendment to make sure that in this inland water bill the wording is in accord with the wording of the fisheries bill. It is just a new definition, changing the word "waste" to the other word that is mentioned in the motion. It is a technical amendment put forward in the Senate and we have no objection to it.

Mr. Aiken: May I ask the minister a question? In view of the fact that the amendment to the Fisheries Act has not yet passed the House, either on report stage or on third reading, what on earth is going to happen to this amendment if the Fisheries Act does not go through exactly as the government expects?

Mr. Chrétien: If there is a change in the Fisheries Act we may have a little problem. However, the purpose is quite clear and that is to try to get the same wording in both pieces of legislation. I think that members can try to stall good collaboration between different departments, but I do not think it is wise to do so.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I must caution hon. members against this interesting exchange. I am prepared to recognize the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka if he would like to make some comments on the motion before the House.

Mr. G. H. Aiken (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have some comments, Mr. Speaker, because the minister has given me the background that I wanted. There is one point I want to make which is basic. This is a very minute amendment to the Northern Inland Waters Act but it illustrates what a haphazard, careless, unco-ordinated approach the government has taken to the whole question of water pollution, water management, northern affairs and all the bills that have been before the House during this session of Parliament.

This amendment illustrates the type of thing that many other members of the opposition, and indeed even some members on the government side, have been trying to impress

[Mr. Chrétien.]

on the government, namely, the need for some co-ordination of activities in connection with water pollution and water management in this country. Let's get some person, some body, some minister or organization to co-ordinate everything the federal government is doing in connection with water pollution.

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Aiken: Certainly.

Mr. Chrétien: As the hon. member is aware, in the north there will be a board and the administration of the three pieces of legislation will be controlled by the same board. This will achieve the objective the hon. member has in mind.

Mr. Aiken: My argument is more basic than that, Mr. Speaker. I approve of this amendment which we are now being asked to consider. I cannot object to it because of the way it has been handled. But I am pointing out that these three bills were jockeyed back and forth between three committees. One committee did not know what the other was doing, nor did one department know what another department was doing. There was jockeying between the management of water resources under the Canada Water Act, under the Northern Inland Waters Act, which we are now considering, under the Fisheries Act and the Arctic Waters Pollution Act.

We started off in a fairly good fashion because waste was defined identically in all bills. When the Fisheries bill was studied by the Committee on Fisheries and Forestry, however, that committee decided that the word "waste" did not suit the Fisheries Act and so they decided to use the words "deleterious substances". The Canada Water Act, Bill C-144, was referred to the Committee on National Resources and Public Works. We worked on that bill from early February until May, and it was finally passed in the House. At the same time, the Fisheries Act was before the House and then went to the Committee on Fisheries and Forestry. The fisheries bill was intended to achieve the same purpose, although it was a little more definite.

I see the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry (Mr. Davis) here and I have to say that he took us one step further from where the Canada Water Act had left us. Nevertheless, the Fisheries Act was amended and the word "waste" was redefined to read "deleterious