

Criminal Code

normal surface streams—and this would certainly be true of the North Saskatchewan river, as I am sure my friend the hon. member for Prince Albert would agree—are not safe to drink until they are treated in water purification plants. From that it follows that since the waters of normal untreated surface streams are not safe to drink there is no reason, when industrial development begins, to prevent the disposal of wastes into such rivers, always provided that the total load, made up by all contributors of effluents, does not exceed the normal capacity of modern municipal water purification plants. While in this present case my hon. friend's amendment to the Criminal Code does not apply to public corporations at all and therefore has no effect upon municipalities, it is noteworthy that the pollution of the North Saskatchewan river, both before and after this straw that broke the camel's back which has been the cause of all this discussion in the house—

Mr. Diefenbaker: It was no straw; it lasted three months.

Mr. Garson: If my hon. friend wishes me to put it that way I shall describe it as the anvil that broke the camel's back. I was about to say that the pollution of the North Saskatchewan river is a composite matter. For example, below Edmonton 50 per cent of the biological oxygen demand pollution load is contributed by that city. Apart from the fact that criminal prosecutions are a most unsatisfactory method of dealing with problems of this sort, even if we accepted the untenable premise that that was a good method my hon. friend's amendment would leave out of account, in this very situation which he is attempting to cure, that factor which contributes 50 per cent of the pollution load at the present time.

Mr. Diefenbaker: What factor is that; municipal sewage?

Mr. Garson: Yes, quite.

Mr. Diefenbaker: That was not what we were disturbed about.

Mr. Garson: No, that is not what my hon. friend is disturbed about; but if he were aware of the fact that the capacity of a river to accept more pollution depends upon the load it is already carrying he would understand that a very substantial contributing factor to the inability of the North Saskatchewan river to carry the additional pollution put into it last year arose from the fact that there was a basic pollution load of 50 per cent already before the latest effluent was put into it at all.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Will the minister allow a question?

Mr. Garson: Yes, certainly.

Mr. Diefenbaker: If my amendment were altered to include municipalities which put raw sewage into rivers and thereby contribute to the pollution, would the minister then accept it?

Mr. Garson: I am now expressing my own personal views. I would not accept it because I would think if that were done it would expose a great many municipalities, including perhaps the city of Ottawa, to prosecution in police court, which prosecution would in my judgment contribute very little, if anything at all, to the solution of the problem with which the hon. member is attempting to deal. In other words, I do not think police court prosecutions are a solution for river pollution. In my opinion the only result of my hon. friend's amendment would be that it would have a very mischievous, disruptive and disturbing effect upon municipalities that discharge effluents into rivers all over Canada, not only in the three western provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba but in all or nearly all provinces of Canada. It would cause a great deal of mischief and make no progress whatever toward a solution of the problem.

The solution by co-operative effort lies along the lines I have been indicating. In line with the letter of Dr. Cross which I have quoted I am told that the companies concerned have been co-operating wholeheartedly in the matter, and that during the past year they have spent something of the order of \$500,000 in an effort to cure this difficulty. I think it is partly as a result of the conference held in Regina on October 1, 1954, that it has been possible to get that degree of co-operation from industry and that degree of co-operation from the government of Alberta, notwithstanding the fact that it did not agree to the setting up of a joint inter-provincial board. As Dr. Cross's letter clearly indicates, and as is also indicated by the heavy expenditure of money that has taken place largely under the auspices of the province of Alberta—it had to be under their auspices since it took place in that province—much greater results leading to a solution of the problem are being achieved already than could conceivably take place as a result of the amendment my hon. friend proposes to make to the Criminal Code.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am extremely sorry to interrupt the minister but I am obliged to advise him that his time has expired.