

Government Organization Act, 1970

Mr. Harding: Mr. Chairman, I listened with a great deal of interest to the two preceding speakers who dealt with clause 6. This is one of the key clauses in the bill. We are told that this government is going to initiate, recommend and undertake programs, and co-ordinate programs which will be designed to promote the establishment or adoption of objectives or standards relating to environmental quality, or to control pollution. We are told that the government is going to promote and encourage the institution of practices and conduct leading to the better protection and enhancement of environmental quality.

We have not heard from anyone on that side of the House how the government intends to do these things. We are not holding up this legislation. The House of Commons is entitled to this information. We are fed up with this passing of permissive legislation which is never complied with by the department concerned. Someone on that side of the House should get up and tell the House of Commons is a crystal clear way what the government intends to do. Surely, the government has a number of programs lined up. Surely, it has a number of projects in mind for various provinces in Canada. Surely, someone in the government should tell us how the government intends to tackle these problems and how much money it intends to spend. How is the government going to approach the over-all problem of pollution which exists in Canada today? I agree with the two preceding speakers who have said we have had absolutely no word from the government in this regard. We should have some information before this clause passes.

• (12:50 p.m.)

But there is something else with which I want to deal which is, in my opinion, vital so far as this legislation is concerned. If those who are interested in environmental standards would look at clause 6 and read to the last line on that page, they would see that it refers to promoting the establishment or adoption of objectives or standards relating to environmental quality, or to control pollution.

Before I sit down I will move an amendment that we make these national objectives our standards. This is what we are after. I have gone through a number of speeches which the minister has been giving from one end of Canada to the other within the past four or five months. He is always talking about national standards. I am going to suggest to the government that if they are interested in national standards, then let us put them in the bill. Reference must be made to them in the legislation which is currently before the House. If the government does not do so, it will be a clear indication, just as we had in the Canada Water Act, that there will be a hodge-podge of standards from one end of Canada to the other, and this we do not want. I want to point out that the minister, himself, has been preaching this idea of national standards which he took from us last year. If this is the philosophy of the new department, then it must be spelled out in the legislation. We are going to insist that it be incorporated there if we can persuade the government that this is what their requirements should be.

[Mr. Barnett.]

I should like to point out the need for national standards. We have gone over this I do not know how many times. If there are no national standards, pollution havens will form from one end of Canada to the other, and the public of Canada do not want pollution havens. The public of Canada do not want one province in Canada to have lower standards than another, thus giving it an opportunity to attract industry. Last year at the federal-provincial conference a number of provinces made submissions to the government. One of their biggest worries was that if national standards are not written into legislation, encouragement would be given to big companies, such as pulp mills, to say to one province that unless it keeps its standards down, the company will move to another province where the standards are lower. This is not what we want. We are fighting pollution in this country, and for goodness sake let us act as sensible politicians in the House. Let us draft legislation which will tell these potential polluters that we do not care where they go because all parts of Canada will be protected. We will not give one part of Canada an advantage over another by allowing a hodgepodge of different standards which can only result in pollution havens. We seem to have a great deal of difficulty in getting this idea home to the government.

I want to point out on this standards issue that two years ago the committee on national resources passed a unanimous report that national standards be established throughout this country. It is amazing to me that there are no members on the government side, who were members of that committee, supporting this report which was unanimously adopted by the committee. They should be telling the government what they want. It should not be left to members of the opposition to draw this to the government's attention constantly.

We have raised the problem of standards and, in a moment, I will move an amendment. Before I do so, I want to again mention the programs to which reference is made here. We will not solve pollution problems in Canada unless this government makes up its mind that vast sums of money will be set aside to tackle these problems. No minister of the Crown has risen to tell us where the government will find this money to carry out the program under consideration. What about the disgraceful mess which results from the fact that many of the big cities are dumping almost 100 per cent of their sewage into adjacent streams? We are told that CMHC has a limited amount of funds allotted to tackle the problem. We should be setting a time limit of five or seven years from in which to achieve our objectives. We should be letting the people of Canada know that when 1975 or 1980 roll around, we will make certain that every municipality in this country will have stopped dumping raw sewage into the waters of this nation. This, objective should be spelled out in the legislation. Then, we should provide funds to these municipalities, low cost loans, so that they can get on with the job of dealing with the sewage problem.

There is a host of other projects. What about the dozens of lakes and rivers that are polluted with mercury