

Water Resources Programs

of July until break-up the following spring; yet sewage from the base continues to pour into it during all that time. It can do nothing but pollute the river further. Now, the minister's department tells us it is gravely concerned about standards of water purity all over Canada. I should think its first task ought to be to put its own house in order. The only way in which we can restore confidence in parliamentary government to citizens throughout this nation is to impose water purity standards on direct federal authority rather than attempt to do so by means of a hodge-podge of provincial regulations which, in the end, could not be enforced.

I have received a very short letter on this subject from a very young person. It reads:

Dear Mr. Skoberg:

I am protesting the pollution of the air and water of Canada and Saskatoon. I am writing to you in the hope that as my M.P. you will do something about this dangerous problem. I suggest you organize a bill which would make anyone polluting the air or water a criminal, punishable by a fine etc. In any case I hope you will do something.

Today, the entire nation is on a pollution kick, as the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) said not long ago. If public insistence on these projects declines, I am afraid this bill will lose whatever teeth the government may be thinking of putting into the regulations which are to accompany it.

I urge the minister to regard with favour the idea of implementing national water standards in order that the provincial boards will not be placed in the position of trying to play one province against another. Only by establishing national standards can we avoid such a situation. I support the amendments which are before us for consideration. I plead with the minister to realize that the people want action now, and that they want national standards to be set—not provincial standards which would be used as a means by which certain provinces would seek to obtain new industries. Only national standards can prevent further pollution of our waters and their application is the only means by which Canadians will be persuaded to place their faith in this government and in this Parliament. We must show them we are prepared to be sincere and put teeth into the legislation now before the House.

Mr. Aiken: I have already spoken on this amendment, Mr. Speaker, and I am now rising on a point of order to inquire whether the minister intends to speak on this amendment. Does he accept the statement which is attributed to him in the *Globe and Mail* this

[Mr. Skoberg.]

morning that he is in favour of standards governing the purity of our water being set in all parts of Canada? I would also ask the minister whether he is prepared to accept one or more of the amendments which are before the House.

Mr. Greene: I am not sure that the hon. member has raised a point of order. I do not know that I ought to seek to answer the *Globe and Mail*, but I would be perfectly prepared to speak briefly when others who may wish to speak on this amendment are finished.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): I am only rising to make sure that the minister intends to speak. I do not know of any subject upon which the Canadian people have expressed their views more clearly in the last year or two, than upon this one. I remember a speech made by the present Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. MacEachen) when he was minister of health and welfare in which he promised the introduction of a bill which would guarantee pure air and clear water to every Canadian. I must say that in my opinion this legislation has proved a great disappointment to a very large number of Canadians who have formed various organizations in an attempt to arouse the Parliament of Canada and the provincial legislatures to pass legislation which would stop the increasing pollution of our rivers, lakes and streams. I hope the minister will tell us why it is not possible to entrust some central agency with the task of setting national standards.

I wish, also, to draw attention to two things which are apparent to anyone who has even an elementary knowledge of public administration. The first is that if standards are to be set by water quality management boards, industry will naturally gravitate to areas where standards are lowest, or to where there are no standards at all. As a matter of fact, the pressure on these boards to lower their standards will be tremendous. I can think of scores of communities where the promise of a new industry that would provide 1,000 or 2,000 jobs if the pollution standards were lowered would bring so much pressure from the Chamber of Commerce, the trade unions and the people of the community that it would be a very unusual board indeed that would be able to withstand the pressure and retain high pollution control standards. The