

Alleged Lack of Action to Combat Pollution

unless we are prepared to allow them 25 to 50 years to cope with it. However, we just have not got that much time. For it to be dealt with immediately requires massive provincial and federal funds and other kinds of assistance. All Canada will have to pitch in to help solve, and pay for the reduction and prevention of, municipal pollution.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member but his time has expired.

Mr. Benjamin: Mr. Speaker, may I have another two or three minutes?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If there is unanimous consent to allow the hon. member to continue.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Benjamin: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker; I became so interested in what I was saying that I forgot the time.

May I conclude by mentioning a matter that has been raised so many times, namely the constitutional and jurisdictional question. I should like to ask the minister to read a magazine called *Civic Administration* for November 1967 which carried an interview with the former Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. The headline reads: "I've said it before—it's not our baby". The article deals with water and air pollution, and so far I cannot believe that the present minister has that attitude. This question can no longer be a legalistic fantasy for governments of all levels to hide behind. It is strange how in some matters the federal government can act without worrying about provincial jurisdiction. The federal government has previously inserted itself into provincial jurisdiction, and I mentioned the Combines Investigation Act as one example. One can also mention housing standards under Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation as well as in the matter of fisheries. In this connection I ask hon. members to read the speech made by the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Davis) last May 22. So there are lots of past experiences and present examples, and there is nothing to prevent future action. There can be federal intervention without hiding behind what I call this legalistic fantasy of federal, provincial or municipal jurisdiction. There is no reason why the same kind of federal intervention cannot be made in regard to pollution, whether committed by individuals, municipalities or industry.

I am not one of those who believe that air and water fall under provincial jurisdiction. Nor do I believe that they should. Our water, whether it be in Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec or British Columbia, belongs to all Canadians. As a visitor to Niagara Falls from Saskatchewan I am as likely to get sick drinking or bathing in the water there as any other Canadian, but it is still Canadian water. Water is no respecter of boundaries.

As a layman may I suggest that there are two facets of pollution that should surely come under federal jurisdiction completely and solely. I refer to air and water pollution. I submit that if this government were to ask the provinces for jurisdiction over this area of pollution now, they would get it. If they did not get it, I am confident there is enough awareness of this problem and concern about it in the minds of Canadians in every province that they would raise cain with any province that refused to relinquish its jurisdiction in this regard to the federal government. So here is another and final area into which the minister and the government should move. They need no longer use the British North America Act as one way of avoiding the exercise of their responsibilities and the taking of effective measures to control and prevent pollution.

● (9:20 p.m.)

Mr. Hyl Chappell (Peel South): Mr. Speaker, the motion under debate alleges neglect in asserting federal leadership in respect of pollution and criticizes the approval of the estimates of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources by the standing Committee on National Resources and Public Works. Those departmental estimates were referred to the committee on February 20, and the fourth report of the committee was presented on May 30. The committee was, of course, composed of members of all parties. The mover of the motion, the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka (Mr. Aiken), is one of the Progressive Conservative members, the hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr. Harding) who was the second speaker in this debate is an N.D.P. representative on that committee and I happen to be one of the Liberal party representatives. It is truly amazing how that report, which seems to be in such clear English, can be so misunderstood or misconstrued. One therefore questions the responsible attitude of its critics. The committee heard many witnesses. We took trips and examined many facilities and projects.