

Clean Air Act

wonder fish are showing high concentrations of lead in the waters off southern California.

As hon. members know, we have proceeded first in our attack on pollution in water. Canadians generally have recognized that the pollution of our rivers, lakes and ocean fronts needed action. The froth, the scum, the closed beaches, the dead fish, were there for all to see. But now they are becoming increasingly concerned with air pollution. They are beginning to notice the smog. They are beginning to look on smoke, not as an indication of industry in progress, but of inefficiency, slothfulness and a wilful disregard for the quality of life around us.

Most provinces, today, have water authorities. They have provincial departments concerned with water management. They have water pollution control boards and they have water commissions. Now, they are beginning to ask their pollution control boards to look at air as well. They are also beginning to develop their own clean air acts. It is appropriate, therefore, that we take the lead at the federal level; that we provide a basic framework within which the provinces, and the municipalities, can develop their own laws and their own local standards.

Knowing of their interest in, and their concern about, air pollution, I have visited all our provincial capitals in recent days. Without exception our provincial authorities, who are concerned with air pollution, have welcomed our federal initiative in respect of clean air. They have welcomed the idea of national ambient air quality objectives. They like the idea of national guidelines. They are prepared to accept national air quality commission standards set at the point of emission. All they ask is that they be consulted, that they have some say in the development of these particular objectives, guidelines and standards. I have given them that assurance. And, having been given that assurance, they have encouraged us to do all we can, not only to eliminate the worst examples of air pollution in this country, but also to project our own Canadian thinking on air quality to other countries and into the international sphere as well.

As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, we are placing considerable reliance on our federal concern about human health in the clean air bill. Air pollution can strike directly at the health of human beings. Man has no choice but to accept the air he breathes. He has to breathe it whether it is polluted or not. By contrast, man can avoid polluted water. He can drink other things. He can process polluted water and make clean water fairly easily. But, in respect of air pollution, man is in the same vulnerable position as a fish in a polluted lake. He has to live with the pollution. He has to live with it and adjust to it as best he can.

Again, air moves. It moves from place to place, from region to region and from nation to nation. It sweeps across continents and oceans as well. It carries many foreign substances along with it and some anti-life substances. It carries them over great distances. If, by any chance, some of these pollutants get into the upper

atmosphere they may stay there for years. Eventually, they can fall out again. But when they fall out again they may well land on another continent or end up in the oceans themselves. They may go indeed to the ends of the earth.

Air pollution presents us with yet another problem. It is sometimes difficult to pinpoint the sources of pollution itself. Changes in weather and in the direction of air currents make it difficult to put the finger on specific points of emission. They can only be identified over time. They can only be identified as a result of a great deal of research and as a result of a great deal of effort particularly at the national and even at the international level, and this costs money.

We know that the economic burden of air pollution is very high indeed. Our economists tell us it costs Canadians somewhere between \$1 billion and \$2 billion annually. If you add up health costs, building maintenance costs, corrosion costs and cleaning costs, you end up with a very impressive figure indeed. It amounts to several per cent of our gross national product. It is worth eliminating, not only in terms of human health and comfort, but also in terms of economic efficiency as well.

In developing the bill before you now, the government has been guided by certain principles. We recognize that the provinces have a direct responsibility in respect of air pollution. Considerable emphasis must therefore be placed on co-operation between the federal government and the provinces. This can be best accomplished by the federal government entering into formal agreements with the provinces for the purpose of designating air quality problem areas, for the development of special air control measures, and for the development of air quality enforcement procedures. There is also recognition of the need for direct federal action in the event of the failure of other levels of government to take the necessary corrective measures to control air pollution where such pollution affects or is likely to affect health and indeed life. We also see the need for national air quality objectives to serve both as long term goals and to prevent further deterioration of existing air quality.

In drafting the legislation we have come to grips with the basic problems involved in trying to protect the quality of air. I will now try to briefly describe some of these problems. We need to know more about the causes and effects of air pollution and the bill will allow us to work closely with the groups within Canada and in other countries that are involved in this vital area. I should note the valuable work done by the Department of National Health and Welfare—which laid much of the groundwork for Bill C-224—by the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Fisheries and Forestry and others, was basic to the development of this legislation.

From these departments, and as a result of close co-operation with other segments of our scientific community in Canada, we have begun to close the gaps in our scientific knowledge about the effects of pollution on