

*Request for Environmental Council*

First, speaking from the national point of view, may I say that the time has come—and I think my opinion is shared by the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and of the House of Commons on the Constitution of Canada—to assert our national concern with the entire subject of pollution. I notice that in his speech this afternoon the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Davis) once more brought forward that old chestnut that is brought out when various aspects of environmental control are discussed—the constitution. In discussing the old problem involving the constitution he mentioned areas under federal and areas under provincial jurisdiction.

I am looking at the recently tabled report of the constitution committee. At page 91, three sections are devoted to the question of pollution control. Recommendation 100 is as follows:

Control over the pollution of air and water should be a matter of concurrent jurisdiction between the Provincial Legislatures and the Federal Parliament, and, as in section 95 of the British North America Act, the powers of the Federal Parliament should be paramount.

Recommendation 101 reads as follows:

The concurrency of jurisdiction over air and water pollution would necessitate both Federal-Provincial and Province-to-Province planning and coordination or programs.

The report then goes on to endorse the work of the Resource Ministers Council as a means of continuing consultation on matters of renewable resources. There is discussion in great detail regarding the present constitutional set-up involving the control of pollution, and the existing confusion is clearly shown.

• (1730)

Provincial jurisdiction stems from property and civil rights, municipal institutions, local works and undertakings and matters of a local and private nature within a province. Federal jurisdiction is based upon the criminal law, navigation and shipping, coastal and inland fisheries and the regulation of trade and commerce. There is, here, an immense possibility of jurisdictions overlapping. There are obvious difficulties in determining constitutional and political accountability.

It seems to me that the recommendation of the committee on the constitution is of the utmost importance. In recent years a totally new challenge has been developing in line with the growing global crisis relating to the environment. Man has learned that the world's resources are finite and that there is also ever increasing consumption which may threaten, in the long run, our physical and psychological survival.

Despite the statement the minister made today, I did not feel he was expressing a sense of urgency. It is true this may have been because he was not feeling very well himself. But I believe there is a growing militant, popularly based anti-pollution campaign in progress and for the sake of political expediency, if for no other reason, all of us should pay attention to this movement.

I noticed that the Canadian Wildlife Federation said the other day that 65 species of Canadian wildlife are endangered by human activities. I noticed, also, that Dr. McKenna of the York-Finch Hospital in Toronto said that air pollution contributes up to 50 per cent of all ailments

[Mr. Brewin.]

afflicting man. A former Secretary-General of the United Nations, U Thant, said we had ten years in which to act before we smothered in our own waste. So I urge the federal government to use overriding power to deal with this threat, and to set national standards. I am not saying the provinces do not bear a measure of responsibility but I am asserting that the overriding concern is federal.

I undertook to deal with the international aspects of this matter. I know the minister had only 20 minutes in which to speak. I am sorry, though, that he did not use part of that time to deal with the question of the Stockholm conference on the environment which is to take place in June. The whole question of pollution cannot be solved locally, provincially or even nationally. It has become an international concern. For the first time the world community is organizing to try to deal with these international dangers affecting the welfare of humanity. I am sorry the minister is not in the House at the moment and that he did not have time to tell us what initiatives the Canadian government is prepared to put forward at this conference.

I should now like to spend a few minutes dealing with problems in my own constituency. We in the Beaches-Woodbine-Greenwood area of Toronto along the eastern lakefront are deeply concerned about pollution. Local organizations have gone into the facts, made reports and communicated them to elected representatives and to governments. They are actively participating in the battle against pollution. I had occasion the other day to send a questionnaire to my constituents. I asked about a problem which faces one particular area, namely, the smell which emanates from a local sewage disposal plant. I put this question:

The east end (of Toronto) has a problem of air pollution including odours from Ashbridge Bay. Agree or disagree?

Five hundred and thirty-eight people answered the question. Five hundred and fourteen agreed, and 24 disagreed. I suppose the 24 who disagreed are not as sensitive to odours as those who agreed. This was gone into by an organization called ForWard Nine. They conducted an inquiry they called Operation Sniff, the purpose of which was to determine the extent and pervasiveness of the odours coming from this plant. After the study they presented a factual report. I shall spare the House the details, but they were very expressive in their language about this menace to the quality of life in an otherwise excellent residential area.

We are affected not only by air pollution; we are affected by water pollution. The condition of Lake Ontario is not as bad as that of its sister Great Lake, Erie, but fish life is decreasing and bathing is becoming more restricted. We enjoy access to a beautiful recreation area, yet very few people venture to swim there because of the pollution which they fear they will encounter. Again, this is a matter of international concern. We all know that the International Joint Commission has recently negotiated, and I believe entered into, an agreement providing for a tremendous international plan to clean up the Great Lakes.

I was disappointed that the minister in his rather soothing remarks today failed to deal with the fact that, as I understand it, the President of the United States has vetoed the financial measures necessary for the plan