

Water Resources Programs

Mr. Comeau: Mr. Speaker, I did not think my two amendments would come up for debate this afternoon, but here we are again. My amendment is made up of two parts. It deals with the establishment of national quality standards for all classes of Canadian waters. We have discussed this in the standing committee. We heard many briefs in that committee. Various points of view were expressed regarding the establishment of national quality standards for Canadian waters. Some disagreed with the suggestion, others agreed with it, but generally everybody agreed that there should be some form of criteria. Some people did not like the word "standards" but they agreed that there should be some criteria to set a minimum standard of some kind for any particular class of water.

The amendment proposed by the hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr. Harding) is along the same line, and this is simply because in the committee, and in fact for a couple of years when dealing with this subject, we talked along the same line. In opposing this type of amendment, the minister has given his famous example of Hamilton harbour versus Lake Louise. This is his stock answer to it. He suggests that we cannot have the same standards for Hamilton harbour as we would have for Lake Louise. The minister does not seem to realize that we agree with his suggestion. We do not feel there should be the same standards for Hamilton harbour and Lake Louise.

• (4:40 p.m.)

We realize the industrial complexity of Hamilton harbour and we realize the great recreational activity with respect to Lake Louise. We do not say the same standards should apply, but we do say that for one particular recreational class of water there should be a standard so that it can be preserved for recreational purposes. These waters, as I have already stated, should be and are designated now. We know that certain waters are only used for recreational purposes and that certain waters are only used for industrial purposes. I am not saying that if a minimum standard is set Hamilton harbour has to be cleaned up to the point where you can swim in it. I do not think that is possible and we have to be realistic. But if water is designated for recreational purposes, then it should be used that way and there should be a standard for that type of water, whether it be Lake Louise or Lake Heenanoga in my constituency.

It is as simple as that, Mr. Speaker. There have to be some guidelines for these different bodies of water; there have to be some guidelines for industry; there have to be some guidelines for the municipalities and there have to be guidelines for everybody concerned with a particular area of water or water basin. There have to be guidelines so that only the amount of discharge which is designated as safe, after much research and thought, will be permitted. If you do not say that the same guidelines apply to Lake Louise as to another lake used for the same purpose in a different province, then I submit you are simply going to create havens for pollution in some of these areas. You are going to say that in one province it will be possible to pollute more than in another province because there are not national guidelines or standards for a particular class of water. If one province contends that beyond a certain minimum standard you are disrupting the ecology and another province has a lower standard, then industry will naturally seek to establish there. There should be national guidelines in order to eliminate this sort of situation, Mr. Speaker.

Before I leave this subject, Mr. Speaker, I should like to read from the unanimous report of the Standing Committee on National Resources and Public Works dated May 30, 1969, as follows:

Your committee is concerned by the increasing magnitude of air, water and soil pollution and the jurisdictional conflict which hampers the finding and implementing of proper solutions.

Your committee recommends that the government draft a code of standards for the cleaning up of and the future protection of all Canadian waters; that provincial approval of such a code be sought; and that the federal government provide an enforcement procedure—if necessary by means of an amendment to the Criminal Code.

Your committee also recommends that a centre or centres similar to the Canada Centre for Inland Waters be set up to centralize all existing and future federal research in air and soil pollution and to extend and speed up such research so that codes of standards may be drafted to protect the air and soil from pollution.

The committee recommended that a code of standards be drafted for the cleaning up of and the future protection of, all Canadian waters. I see the minister coming in but the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister—

Mr. Hees: This is a very important moment because the minister has decided to come back. This means that he has been here for six minutes out of 3½ hours.