

*Water Resources*

federal government could really take the lead and rally the people of Canada behind it. Had it done so in this case, I am sure no province, no city, no industry could have withstood such an initiative. But the government has failed to take such a lead. It is a great pity, in the circumstances, that hon. gentlemen opposite should have missed the boat, thereby letting the country down.

The measure before it does not commit the treasury to any expenditure to help the provinces or the municipalities in their efforts against pollution. It fails to set national water standards. If passed it will simply add legislation to existing legislation. The onus is still left with the provinces and the municipalities. This bill is not good enough. It should be rewritten with the 1970s in mind rather than the 1940s.

[*Translation*.]

**Mr. André Fortin (Lothbinière):** Mr. Speaker, I have been waiting for some time for the opportunity to express the views of the Ralliement créditiste on Bill C-144 and I have heard in the House well-researched speeches explaining the positions of the various parties.

It seems to me that this bill is stirring up a debate such as we have seldom seen in the House. For once, all hon. members, on the government side as well as in the opposition, recognize with one voice the urgency of getting down once and for all, to the task of preserving Canada's natural resources, especially its water resources.

However, even though we rejoiced at first sight at the introduction of this bill, we do not approve of it unreservedly.

The basic principle of the water conservation policy is therefore to provide on the one hand, for a sound administration and on the other hand, for the most rational utilization of Canada's water.

The bill before us now rests upon undeniable facts, namely that we have in Canada huge water reserves but in view of the shameless waste of such wealth, the federal government is at last compelled to action.

We fervently hope that the measures the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Greene) has in mind do not come too late.

The federal government has decided to take action but, paradoxically, it does not say a word about how much money should be invested to control pollution to any effective degree.

In my opinion, Bill C-144 is an excellent description of global policies but it fails to indicate, from the practical point of view, anything that might lead us to believe that the government is serious about this problem which, according to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources should be given a priority.

There is no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that we have shamefully squandered our wealth, in the past. And there is no doubt that we must do something now. But I doubt whether this is possible without money.

The minister makes no bones about saying this bill is a joint and global undertaking. Joint, because of the hope of ensuring the participation of the provinces, and global, because it aims at pooling all the conceivable initiatives, whether regional, municipal or provincial, in a huge program devised to eliminate pollution.

In consideration of what, if the provinces did not agree to support this pollution control, the federal minister would keep the right to act on his own. This is one of the privileges he secures for himself in the bill.

We are guilty of having squandered our water resources. We have invested a lot of money in industry and trade. However, we have lacked inspiration, foresight and wisdom; we are investing, on the one hand, to improve the situation while, on the other hand, we are squandering our wealth in the most shameful way.

We have completely forgotten our natural resources; our water policy was non-existent. A release published by the minister's office says that some order will be put once and for all in the bureaucratic and jurisdictional maze. I shall come back to this in a moment, but I suggest that we shall really have a basic problem to solve.

In the past everything was left to chance. When a provincial government was asked to help in the solution of a pollution problem, we got the following answer: This does not come under our jurisdiction. This belongs to the federal government. However, when the federal government was asked to solve the same problem, the answer was that it did not come under federal jurisdiction.

I have here the letters of a provincial minister and of a federal one which expose the problem created by pollution. The bureaucratic and jurisdictional maze with regard to water pollution is such a huge problem that Bill C-144, in my humble opinion, will not solve it.