

'FLUSH YOUR OWN FIRST' SAYS LINTON

An American who yesterday said Lake Rotorua was nothing but an unflushed toilet was told by the Mayor of Rotorua he could "do well to go home and flush his own toilet" before commenting on the lake.

Commenting on remarks made by Mr T. P. Moellendorf, a sanitation engineer and biologist with the Public Health Department in Seattle, Rotorua's Mayor, Mr A. M. Linton, said today:

"These people who travel round the world and make comments on things that are obvious to local people, don't make any contribution to the sum of knowledge at all ... particularly when their own area is not better than ours."

Mr Linton said Mr Moellendorf "hasn't told us anything very much that we didn't know."

Mr Linton pointed out that the problems of pollution, enrichment, and lakeweed in Lake Rotorua were currently under study by a panel of experts.

He suggested Mr Moellendorf obtain his facts before making comment.

'Disgusting'

Mr Moellendorf, in New Zealand on holiday, said it was disgusting to travel 7000 miles to find the same problem he had left behind.

In America if sewage was discharged into water, people would not swim in it or even boat or fish in it, he said.

About 190,000 gallons of raw sewage was apparently being poured into Lake Rotorua daily. Diseases such as infective hepatitis remained viable for as long as six weeks in water reservoirs.

Urgent

The problem with Lake Rotorua was particularly urgent because it was only 30ft deep and this was about the depth where most of the bed of the lake could be used as a "vegetable bed."

He had been horrified to see the way diquat was being used to kill off weed, and even more perturbed when he found no research was being carried out to investigate the side-effects of its use.

Dr R. B. Pike, reader in invertebrate zoology at Victoria University, who was also visiting Rotorua yesterday, agreed entirely with Mr Moellendorf.

He said he had been appalled at the suggestion of widespread use of diquat to control lakeweed without preliminary biological observations in small enclosed areas, or full reports from experiments already carried out in the U.S.

Parts of Lake Rotorua, well removed from where sewage entered, were reasonably safe for swimming, the medical officer of health, Rotorua, Dr E. R. T. Overton, said today.

He said that he personally preferred to swim at Hannah's Bay.

Dr Overton said that coliform counts taken by the Health Department in Rotorua in 1967 showed most parts of the lake itself were within the safety limits recognised by the Pollution Advisory Council.

The recognised limit was 1000 coliform counts per 100 millilitres of water.

The highest figure obtained in streams tested round the lake was the Puarenga Stream, into which the city sewage was discharged.

This gave a count of 22,000.

Higher up, at the Whakarewarewa bridge, the count was 4000.

Dr Overton said since then the new Waipa sewerage treatment scheme had been implemented, and he would expect the figure to be now very much lower at Whakarewarewa.

Round the lake, the highest count was 300, taken off the shore from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Other counts were: Launch jetty 90, Hannah's Bay 30, Holden's Bay 15.

Dr D. Spiller, scientific adviser to the Lands and Survey Department on the lakeweed problem, said today it was apparent that neither Mr Moellendorf, nor Dr Pike had given their attention to the weed problem for a sufficient time for them to be adequately informed.

"I am sure, for example, that neither Mr Moellendorf nor Dr Pike have any idea how much diquat is being used nor where, nor when." He said.

Adviser

Dr Spiller, who was recently appointed secretary of the National Research Advisory Council in Wellington, has left the D.S.I.R., but will continue to act in an advisory capacity on lakeweed for the Lands and Survey Department, which controls the Rotorua lakes.

He said there was no doubt Rotorua was being enriched, as was every other lake in New Zealand.

It was probably being enriched at a rather high rate, and in general terms this rate of enrichment should not be allowed to be continued.

Reticence

Dr Spiller said it would better become sanitary engineers and biologists to exercise a due reticence till they had sufficiently studied what was involved, and were in a position to give the public a well-balanced and professional opinion, rather than an "instant and ill-considered and probably erroneous viewpoint."