

The controversy that surrounded the Amax operation eventually resulted in the creation of a commission appointed by the government to examine the scientific evidence related to the deposit of the tailings in Alice Arm. Dr. McInerney of the University of British Columbia was appointed to chair the commission. I believe the report, with recommendations, has already been presented to the government.

I regret that when the appointment of the commission was announced, the Nishga refused to testify. They have legitimate concerns and I think they ought to have brought them before the inquiry. These concerns are now being conveyed to us by the local representative and this is legitimate, but still, I think it would have been better if they had appeared before the public inquiry to answer questions put by the commissioners, who could have determined to what extent the complaints were valid.

I endorse the action taken by the hon. member for Skeena in requesting these papers, although I would have liked to see the request cover more than just those aimed at the so-called, rightly or wrongly, influence peddling involved in obtaining the permit in the first place. In addition, I would like to have before us the environmental, social and economic factors that went into the decision to issue the permit to Amax in the first place.

Mr. Brian Tobin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the Government of Canada, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. LeBlanc) and his department are always very much concerned that the environmental standards set by that department, the Department of the Environment and, indeed, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, are adhered to. We respect the wish of any group, any individual or any member of this House to raise questions in order to ensure all regulations are being followed from an environmental point of view. That is the crux of the issue today.

On the other hand, the question before us today is not one of environmental regulations being met or not being met or whether all safeguards have been imposed that should be; instead, we have heard the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Fulton) put forward a carefully orchestrated series of insinuations. I personally believe that hon. members should keep in mind that they enjoy the protection of this House and should not abuse it.

I want to point out that through his insinuations the hon. member for Skeena has called into question the integrity of the Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario. Standing Order 35 reads:

● (1730)

No member shall speak disrespectfully of Her Majesty, nor of any of the Royal Family, nor of His Excellency or the person administering the Government of Canada; nor use offensive words against either House, or against any member thereof. No member may reflect upon any vote of the House, except for the purpose of moving that such vote be rescinded.

The first sentence is the relevant point here. I notice that the Chair did not rule or call the member to order today, but I

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would like to reserve my right, to raise a question of privilege after examining the blues. I say to my colleague opposite who spoke on behalf of the Conservative party that I respect the intelligent and rational way he approached this issue. I reserve the right to raise a question of privilege later concerning the comments made by the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Fulton) in so far as they reflected upon the integrity of the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario.

My first reaction to the motion for debate presented by the hon. member for Skeena was one of astonishment that he would choose to waste the time of this House on an issue that has been already adequately answered, explained and, I thought, laid to rest some time ago.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Order, please. I am somewhat concerned because, in the first instance, I had some difficulties while the hon. member for Skeena was speaking and I have been taking some time to consider his remarks and to review the authorities on the subject. That ought not to be interpreted as leaning in either direction with regard to what the hon. parliamentary secretary has now referred to as a possible question of privilege.

Second, I am concerned that the hon. member for Skeena is not present at a time when the parliamentary secretary has indicated that there may be a question of privilege involved.

Finally, I am concerned that in the normal course of events, questions of privilege are usually raised as quickly as possible when the occasion arises.

I think the Chair has a duty to all members. There is some concern about the remarks, but again I underline the fact that I am not predisposing myself or any other occupant of the chair to make a judgment in that regard. It is sufficient, in my view, that the parliamentary secretary has noted the matter. He will realize, and he does realize I am sure, that if he is going to raise such a matter, he will want to proceed in the ordinary fashion and not at a later indefinite, date, and that after giving the matter some thought, he will proceed as he wishes. I think we should close the matter off, but that does not mean it is not open for debate. I will, however, take it as notice that a possible question of privilege has been raised, and the parliamentary secretary will proceed as he sees fit.

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, as soon as I began to make my point regarding a possible question of privilege and what I believe to be the calling into question of the integrity of the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, I was somewhat disappointed to see the hon. member for Skeena scurrying behind the curtains and out through the door. That in itself is disappointing, but what is doubly disappointing—and I have to turn away from my text once again—is that as the hon. member spoke, I asked myself what is being accomplished here today. Are we hearing from the hon. member the honest heartfelt concern of a member for a certain group of people in the province of British Columbia, namely, the Nishgas?

Mr. Manly: Absolutely.