

On that point my hon. friend is right. We have been working very, very carefully and very well. But it is to do a dishonour to Canada to suggest that we find ourselves in the company of Third World countries which unfortunately find themselves in a league totally different from ours. That is unfair and inaccurate.

With regard to my trip, I point out to my hon. friend that he was very eulogistic in 1984 when his former leader on the way out went to Czechoslovakia, Switzerland, East Germany, Romania, Moscow, London and Paris. Where was he then?

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GREAT LAKES

Mr. Girve Fretz (Erie): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

As reported in a recent news account, a senior official with the Canadian Coast Guard stated that it lacks equipment or plans to deal with a major chemical spill from a tanker in the Great Lakes.

My question for the minister is this: Is that report true? If so, what does the minister intend to do about it?

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member knows that next to safety of life, prevention of marine pollution including marine spills is the Coast Guard's first priority.

We take great pride in the fact that over the past years with the help of people from environment and the Coast Guard all chemical-carrying tankers must now comply with stringent construction and operating standards. Many are double hull as he probably knows.

By regulation the industry is required to have the capability to respond to spills of over 300 different types of chemicals. The Coast Guard's primary role is to ensure potential polluters are able to respond. I think they are doing an excellent job and will keep improving the situation.

Mr. Speaker: I should advise the House that we will begin with a question of privilege from the hon. member for Churchill. I will follow that with a ruling which I am obliged to bring to the House.

Following that, and I want members to know this, there will be a tribute to a former colleague of ours from British Columbia, Alex Patterson. I think the hon. member for Fraser Valley East will speak first and I

Privilege

understand other hon. members will want to say something.

To begin with, the hon. member for Churchill on a question of privilege.

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PRIVILEGE

WESTRAY MINE

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, on December 8, 1990 before the mine disaster occurred at Westray, question No. 437 was placed on the Order Paper on my behalf. The question read: "Were any calls or correspondence exchanged between the Prime Minister's office and any person or organization inside or outside government regarding the Westray coal mine project at Pictou, Nova Scotia? If so, on what dates and with which parties?"

I placed that question on the Order Paper recognizing it was one that required detailed study by government because I wanted a detailed answer. I recognized at that time that government officials had many questions about the funding of the Westray project. We were curious to know exactly what the role of the Prime Minister's office was with regard to that particular project.

On March 18, 1991 the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister responded to me stating in part: "Correspondence and calls received by the Office of the Prime Minister regarding the Westray coal mine project are noted and forwarded to the Minister of Industry, Science and Technology".

During the break I had an opportunity to read the information the government had to file as a result of the access to information request put forward by the *Halifax Chronicle-Herald* on this very issue.

As I noted during Question Period, there were a number of times when either the principal secretary to the Prime Minister or the chief of staff of the Prime Minister, Peter White and Stanley Hartt, were directly and personally involved in these discussions. They took phone calls, made phone calls, attended meetings with government officials and attended meetings with representatives of Curragh Resources.

• (1505)

I know if there have been a number of rulings by speakers one cannot really argue about an answer; if one does not like the answer it is a matter of argument and