

rather odd to me that for three days prior to today the plea from members on this side of the House has been ignored by the government.

• (1640)

Mr. Nielsen: And denied by the government.

Mr. Harding: Yes, and denied by the government. There are several points which I think we should discuss in this debate. I certainly welcome the remarks of the last speaker, the hon. member for New Westminster (Mr. Hogarth). I agree with the majority of his remarks.

This is a serious problem and it is of grave concern to every resident of British Columbia. I think it is time we did some pretty plain speaking and some pretty plain questioning of the government as to their tactics in dealing with pollution problems.

One of the first points I raise is that of contingency plans. Almost two years ago we dealt both in committee and in the House with contingency measures for handling oil spills. What was the result? We were supposed to have these measures implemented and supplies made available in every part of Canada to handle an oil spill if it occurred. What has happened in the case of this rather minor oil spill which took place on the west coast but which has caused immense damage? Precious few contingency measures were taken. This is why we asked for an investigation by the committee on external affairs, because this is an international problem.

The motion I moved yesterday requested that the committee go out to the west coast to look into the problem and to find out what happened. Were we able to move contingency supplies into the area and contain the oil before damage was done to the beach? The answer is no. We have every right to ask the government what their contingency plans are and what they have done in this regard in other parts of Canada.

If we have to cope with a major oil spill in the Great Lakes—and we might have had one in respect of the ship that was wrecked in the St. Clair River—or if we had a major oil spill in the north, what will the government do? Are supplies available to handle such cases? Again, the answer is no. The job has not been done over the last year and a half to adequately carry out the measures needed to implement our contingency plans. We have every right to question the government on this and other matters.

There is another point which I wish to bring to the attention of the House. I revert to the oil problem. Sometimes one wonders to what extent politics are involved in pollution legislation put before the House. Over two years ago we passed the Arctic pollution bill. We have set a 100-mile radius in the Arctic to keep ships from the area and to protect the delicate Arctic ecology from pollution. But that act has not yet been proclaimed although more than two years have elapsed since it was passed by the House.

Some hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. Harding: I say that this is a phony issue which the government is always dragging out before the public. Not only has the bill not been proclaimed, but regulations have not yet been drafted. This government, the cabinet

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members and the party in power in Canada today has been using this issue to say to the people, "Look what we did in the Arctic". Legislation is sitting on the statute books of Canada, legislation which has not even been proclaimed, and the government wonders why people interested in ecological problems are angry with their performance.

We also have the inland waters act respecting the north. Although it has been proclaimed, regulations have not been brought down. Therefore it is useless. We passed this act over two years ago, but the legislation is useless without regulations. If we examine the list of legislation which deals with pollution problems in this nation, we find that the government has only been playing around with it. In effect, it has been misleading the Canadian public. Frankly, we are fed up with this approach to the problem.

There is another matter that I wish to draw to the attention of hon. members. We fought for it in committee and we have raised it in the House. Under the Arctic Waters Prevention Pollution Act we have set a 100-mile radius of protection. There is nothing wrong with it; I endorse it. But why do we not have the courage to set a 100-mile pollution control zone on the east and west coasts of Canada? We have been urging the government to set up such a zone. This does not mean that we will have complete control in the zone, but we will have the right to control shipping there.

Just a few weeks ago we had a serious wreck on the southeastern coast of Vancouver Island. A ship with a Japanese cargo thought it was 70 miles to the south: it was wrecked and as a result we had another oil spill. The ship came in without radar and without proper compasses. We should have an opportunity to check these ships sailing under flags of convenience. These ships are in the registry of a foreign country and are often inadequately built and equipped with inadequate instruments. They are certainly not safe for navigating on the west coast, down the Straits of Juan de Fuca and up the Strait of Georgia.

What is the government doing about this problem? There is every chance in the world of the TAPS pipeline coming from Prudhoe Bay to the west coast. Perhaps we will see a million barrels of oil per day shipped down the coast. Much of it will travel up the Straits of Juan de Fuca, one of the most dangerous straits in the world for ships. We will not see a small oil spill of a 1,000 gallons or so, because there is danger of tankers coming in there with 100,000 tons of oil. If there is one calamity, one wreck, immense damage will result from one end of the B.C. coast to the other.

What has this government done? We have made some amendments to the shipping act, and we have set up a fund. We will charge so much per ton of oil coming into our refineries and our ports until the fund is built up to a certain level. Recently, demands have been made by Nova Scotian oil companies that the rate of 15 cents per ton be reduced because they cannot handle it. I understand that the government is making some adjustment in this regard. The people of this nation have a right to demand protection of our shores from oil spillage. It is amazing to me that with all these dangers facing us, so little has been done.