

Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act

ronmental issues, it has not developed and could not develop within an acceptable time-frame the operational and scientific expertise requisite for the regulation of shipping and prevention of operational or accidental shipborne pollution. As for measures subsequent to incidents of pollution involving shipping, while both the Department of the Environment and Transport Canada possess co-ordinated contingency plans for pollution clean-up, Transport Canada has evidenced the propriety of its mandate under the act by its demonstrated capability and experience.

In summary, if prevention of pollution is effectively to remain as a prime objective and concern, Transport Canada's experience and expertise dictate that it is the most appropriate department with which responsibility should rest for that part of the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act.

The second major facet of the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act which must be understood is that, in so far as it relates to ships and shipping, the provisions of the act relating to pollution prevention and safety of life at sea closely parallel those under the Canada Shipping Act. In fact this is so much so that regulations under the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act refer directly to the Canada Shipping Act and regulations thereunder.

While a nominal legal distinction exists between the two acts, there is in practical terms a very close familial link between them in their origins, the areas they cover, and in the expertise required to administer them, with the result that the two acts are inextricably intertwined. It would not therefore be advisable to transfer responsibility for the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act from Transport Canada because such an artificial administrative separation could only lead to undesirable inefficiencies, profligacy of resources, and possibly inconsistency of policy.

In conclusion, it is submitted that based on all the foregoing, no change in the administrative responsibility for the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act is warranted and, therefore, the status quo should be maintained with Transport Canada continuing in its responsibilities vis-à-vis the act and with the Minister of Transport continuing in his delegated function vis-à-vis the act.

Mr. Dave Nickerson (Western Arctic): Madam Speaker, I will speak very briefly on this subject. I have to agree with the last speaker when it comes to the matter of transferring the jurisdiction under this act from where it resides at the present with the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) to the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Roberts). It seems only natural to me that all aspects of shipping should come under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Transport.

Most of the technical matters with which we are dealing when discussing Arctic pollution prevention deal with things such as the design of the hull of the vessels, the methods of propelling those vessels, the quantities of the various commodities which the vessels carry, the manner in which the cargo is stored, and the types of navigational equipment which must be carried by those vessels when operating in those waters.

Those, to me, would seem to be logical areas which should come under the Minister of Transport.

If we were to transfer jurisdiction for this one area to a different ministry, then I would think that it would require much duplication. We would have vessels being inspected by people from the coastguard and people from environment. Surely this is something which we would want to avoid. It is necessary for us to pass regulations to enable inspections to take place, and that is only right and proper, but at the same time we should make sure that those people who undergo the inspections are subjected to as little duplication as possible. They should be able to get away with one inspection, instead of two inspections by two different people who would be looking at very much the same thing.

This subject is important, because if one looks to the future, to the next ten years to 20 years, the volume of shipping in the Arctic will undoubtedly increase. We can look forward to a day when there will be commercial usage of the Northwest Passage, and one of these days it will be a world major waterway. We can look forward to the development of liquefied gas tankers and oil tankers operating in the Arctic. There are evident dangers involved in this situation, so it is something to which we should address our minds.

I believe that there is a need for better navigational aids in the Arctic. I am told that the electronic navigational aids presently in use are probably not as good as those in use on the east coast and the west coast. These aids should be upgraded, but this will cost money and take time. It is something into which the Government of Canada should be looking.

One of the areas which the Department of the Environment should be looking at in this situation is in fields such as ice reconnaissance and meteorology. If we want to put the ships through the easiest, least risky route, then we need good systems of ice reconnaissance, and to forecast weather conditions in that part of Canada.

So far we have avoided any major oil spills or pollution in the Arctic, and I hope that this will continue. I would like to compliment the public servants who are involved in inspection and regulation in the Arctic. I think by and large they have done a pretty good job and that they are continuing to do so. Most of the marine and land operators in the Arctic take a pretty responsible position because they do not want any major environmental mishaps either. Sometimes we are overly critical of these people who act on our behalf with respect to inspection in this part of the country.

Of course, such work is not completely risk free. If we want to develop oil and gas resources in the north, there will always be some risk involved. One of our goals should be to weigh those risks. We must be prepared to take some risks while at the same time we must do our best to make sure that major mishaps do not occur. Although the present system could be modified somewhat, it is a good system of co-ordinating committees that look after the interests of various government departments that have the responsibility in that area.