

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): I am going to say to the Hon. Minister that this is not a presidential style of government when Ministers come in at their own pleasure in their own time. This is a parliamentary Government in which the Minister should be listening.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): If he had any other engagements this evening he should have set them aside. This is an environmental tragedy and this Minister should be here to listen to the Members of the House of Commons.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): I do not usually draw attention to the absence of Ministers, or even the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney), when he has important issues of state—

Mr. Charest: Or your own absence at one time.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): When I have to be here I am here, and on an environmental occasion this Minister ought to be here.

It is quite clear that this is not the first time that this has happened. On December 22, we had an oil spill off the State of Washington. There was damage then to birds and to sea life and the coastline of Vancouver Island. At that time, despite the meagre entreaties of the Minister of Fisheries—and we will wait to see what the Minister of Transport has to say, and if the Minister of the Environment shows up, fine—there was no action by the Government of Canada at all. It was not prepared. If it had not been for the residents of the area that would also have been a disaster, and they know it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Fisheries made a very complacent speech. He said that on the basis of the current winds and the current tides we have nothing to worry about. I would far rather rely in this instance on the first-hand knowledge of the Hon. Member for Skeena (Mr. Fulton) who is there, who knows the geography and who is relying on the maps.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): I happen to believe that if there is a change of wind and if the tide were to compound with that wind that spill could seep across the Panhandle on to the west coast of British Columbia,

S. O. 52

down through the Prince of Wales Islands off the Alaska coast and into the Queen Charlottes. That is not beyond the realm of possibility, dealing with the amount of oil that we are dealing with in this current spill.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): I will rely on the fact that this is a threat. Anyone who has had the opportunity, as my wife Geills and I have had, as have many British Columbians including yourself, Mr. Speaker, to visit the Prince of Wales Islands and the Queen Charlotte Islands, to see what a priceless asset we have in this country, knows that this is where some of the greatest aquaculture of the world is found.

I have been fortunate in my life to have visited up and down the west coast of British Columbia and Alaska to view that spectacular coastline. It is one of the world's environmental treasures. There are limitless nesting grounds for hundreds of varieties of birds. There is a spectacular diversity of marine life. It is home to a dozen species of whale, as well as to the Stellar sea-lion. The fisheries are unbounded. It has been the home for 6,000 years of the Haida nation, the Haida people, decimated as they were in the mid-19th century by smallpox out of a voyage out of San Francisco on the way to the Alaska Panhandle. In any event, this is something that is worth protecting. This is something that Canadians consider important. This is something that is apt and just to be debated on the floor of the House of Commons this evening, and I congratulate the Hon. Member for Skeena.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, we all seek economic benefits. We all seek good jobs. We all want to develop the resources of this country as best we can. I think the lesson of this debate is that we are not going to have economic growth if we poison our fish, destroy our salmon, and contaminate our herring. We are not going to have tourism if our waters and our beaches turn to sludge and scum. The environmental imperative, the idea of sustainable development, is one that despite the rhetoric of the Throne Speech I believe all of us in the House of Commons accept.

Any Member of this House knows the terms of environmental imperative which I quoted on several occasions. I had an opportunity three or four years ago with Geills at a potlatch, illegal under the Indian Act, of meeting with the four chiefs of the Haida nation.