

Adjournment Debate

spill to go except into the main stream. If you were to take a boom and string it across that slough—it would need to be no more than 200 years long—you would enclose that entire spill and prevent it getting into the main stream of the Fraser River. But because the department was so slow or negligent, the main part of the spill got into the Fraser and was swept as far down as Cherry Point.

Maybe the officials of the department think that oil spills can be so regulated as to occur between the hours of nine and five when they would not interfere with normal office hours. Incidentally, that particular spill is supposed to have cost anywhere between \$70,000 and \$200,000, which represents the labour cost of cleaning up. That does not include the cost of supplies and equipment. It certainly does not include the wages lost by the fishermen who were out of commission for about ten days. Meanwhile all the salmon were going up stream. The Americans were continuing to fish. They are getting their catch. The Canadians are losing it all. I wonder if the loss by the fishermen is not upwards of around \$1 million because of that one spill.

● (2222)

I asked whether anyone had been sacked. The minister had the audacity to say no. He said he looked into it thoroughly, they gave him a run-through, and no one was sacked. Why did heads not roll? Had that happened in a free enterprise company dealing with the logging industry or something like that, heads would have rolled.

Anyone acquainted with the operations of MacMillan Bloedel on the west coast knows that they wanted a more efficient operation and heads rolled. However, in the government it is necessary to protect these people. I assume there was not even a lateral transfer.

We know it was not the fault of the equipment. It has to be the fault of the personnel. What kind of protection do the fishermen on the west coast have when we have that kind of personnel and this minister who protects that personnel?

This is the reason I have been asking for stand-by equipment in Surrey and White Rock, which would be the first to get the effect of a spill should it come north from Cherry Point. It is not because the equipment will be any better there, but because the people living there have a vested personal interest in making sure that equipment will get out to where the oil spill is doing damage.

Maybe the minister will now respond to my request and provide us with that kind of emergency equipment. We cannot depend on officials in Environment Canada in Vancouver to deploy that equipment from as close as 15 miles to Steveston.

I would like a categorical answer from the parliamentary secretary as to what will happen to the officials in the department. Will they share some of the responsibility? Will we get some equipment in Surrey and White Rock to make sure that people who have a personal interest at heart will get that equipment there and give them the opportunity to protect

themselves, because Environment Canada sure is not going to do it?

Mr. Mike Landers (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Environment)): Mr. Speaker, on November 22 the hon. member for Surrey-White Rock (Mr. Friesen) questioned the Minister of the Environment (Mr. LeBlanc) about his department's response to the oil spill from the Canadian Fishing Company Limited at Steveston, B.C. The hon. member stated that officials did not follow up on the spill report until the next day and that it took 44 hours to get equipment to the spill scene.

The facts are as follows. On Monday, August 29, 1977, an abandoned fueling pipeline under the Canadian Fishing Company Limited, known as CANFISCO, cannery dock began leaking heavy bunker B fuel into Steveston harbour. In-coming fishermen reported the presence of oil to the CANFISCO manager who investigated the cannery wharf area at about 7.30 p.m. He found nothing out of the ordinary and took no further action.

At 10.50 p.m. the DPW dredger *Fort Langley*, inbound to Steveston harbour, reported to the Canadian Coast Guard's Vessel Traffic Management Centre the presence of oil in the Fraser River channel. The centre then began to alert responsible agencies. At 11.45 p.m. the environmental protection service duty officer called the resident departmental officer at Steveston and asked him to investigate. Contrary to the hon. member's allegations, immediate action was taken. The departmental officer carried out an on-site investigation and reported that he could see very little oil.

At 6.45 a.m. on August 30 the two departmental officers began a careful search for oil under the old wharves at Steveston harbour and soon found an estimated 5,000 gallons of oil among the debris, logs and abandoned nets under the cannery wharf. The source of the spill was soon identified as a broken six inch pipe leading to the CANFISCO storage tank. Some 10,000 gallons had spilled. CANFISCO officials assumed responsibility for the spill and Clean Seas Canada Limited were called in to contain and clean up the spill. By 8.45 a.m., a small crew from Clean Seas were on the scene and spread peat moss in the oil to consolidate it under the wharves. Environmental protection service officers asked that the area be boomed to ensure containment during recovery operations. The contractor did not manage to do this until 1.45 p.m.

● (2227)

The facts speak for themselves. Departmental officers did not fail to respond immediately to notification of a spill. It did not take 44 hours to get equipment to the scene. While I regret the inconvenience to the fishermen, I believe the delay in opening of the salmon fishing period was the prudent and responsible course of action to take.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.28 p.m.