

Mr. Rose: We know that about a year ago or more the government had a member who made much capital out of the Alaska tanker route issue. He is now the Liberal party leader in British Columbia. What did they do to the hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich when he wanted to have his committee travel to the west coast to hold hearings? They repudiated him. Instead of sending his committee to British Columbia they sent that member to British Columbia permanently.

• (1510)

Mr. Speaker, interest on this side of the House in this issue is not new. I happen to have here a list of questions and speeches directed to ministries by members of my party and other parties dating as far back as January 28, 1971. The litany of expressed concern about this problem runs through the whole period until the inevitability of the spill which occurred last weekend. Each time the government was approached on this matter it wrung its collective hands and shook its collective heads. When the Secretary of State for External Affairs was asked what he intended to do about Amchitka he suggested we pray. Is this what his advice is on oil spill prospects? The government's own appointee, Dr. McTaggart Cowan, as engineer in respect of the Chedabucto Bay tragedy involving the *Arrow* said it is not a matter of "if" there are to be oil spills as a result of the location of a refinery at Cherry Point but rather a matter of "when".

In that particular part of British Columbia the track record on sea mishaps runs at about 7 per cent per year. Last Thursday, I believe, when we were privileged to hear that old smoothie, the Minister of Transport (Mr. Jamieson), giving testimony before the Transport Committee on the estimates of the Ministry of Transport, he admitted that legally there was nothing Canada could do to protect itself against the transgressions in respect of the installation of this refinery in the United States. He admitted this.

After our experience with the Chedabucto Bay affair, in terms of clean-up contingency plans I am certain there could have been a little more preparatory effort beyond the provision of a couple of loads of baled hay. The hon. member for Surrey-White Rock (Mr. Mather) will have to petition the government once more to have the name of his riding changed to Black Rock if things like this keep up.

Something else Canadians may not be fully aware of—I am sure they may not be because the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Davis) was not aware of it when I asked him a question earlier last fall—is whether or not oil from Alaska is already being carried down British Columbia's inside passage to Seattle. When I asked him about this the Minister of the Environment said such was not the case. When I asked the same question of the Minister of Transport, I received a long detailed letter outlining how oil is in fact being barged through the inside passage between Vancouver Island and the mainland of British Columbia bound for Seattle. This kind of transportation and ecologically risky situation has been occurring for some years, and I think shows how much one hand of the government knows what the other hand is doing.

Last weekend's oil spill must serve as a great warning to all of us. It is a relatively modest leak although tragic

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enough in its consequences. The spill happened in the only really warm water or Mediterranean area which in the Pacific Northwest serves the thousands of people who live in the lower mainland of Vancouver. The ecological transgression in respect of Robert's Bank in the same area was bad enough but now the probable destruction of the recreational area and fishing industry of the Fraser Valley is too much. We must have a much more vigorous and determined government posture than we have seen so far. We debate today about a veritable squirt of oil. The amount of oil involved in the Chedabucto Bay *Arrow* oil spill I believe was around 10,000 tons. However, there are tankers carrying 250,000 tons of oil today and it is anticipated that those on the drawing boards will carry 500,000 tons.

What does the government intend to do about this? A couple of years ago when the Minister of Transport was introducing amendments to the Canada Shipping Act, after he had been repudiated by the oil companies at the Law of the Sea Conference at Geneva, said Canada would go it alone and that we would have the toughest and most rigorous laws of any nation. What has been done? Have we demanded structural changes in respect of ships calling at our ports? Have we refused to let dock those ships—those hulks and tubs mainly of Greek origin—which fly flags of convenience mainly out of Liberia, Panama and other permissive states? In the case of the *Arrow* it was admitted in the House that it was absolutely impossible to trace the ownership of that vessel and therefore to nail down the responsibility for damages. I am hoping that in the course of this debate, since it has been initiated by the government, we will hear a little more about what the government intends to do in future. I certainly hope it intends to do something because it is certain and clear that it has not done anything so far.

I believe I have made my point, Mr. Speaker. I should like in conclusion to suggest that we wish to support this motion. We would have liked to do so three days ago but were not given the opportunity because our motions were voted down. I am sorry the government found itself so threatened that it thought it was necessary to use this kind of device to bring this serious problem before the people of Canada.

• (1520)

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, the motion now before us is obviously important. It deals with pollution along the Pacific coast and emphasizes the lack of firm action from this government in this regard, except for lengthy high-flow statements.

Mr. Speaker, this motion is so important that we agreed, in the interest of the Canadian people, to hold a special immediate debate of about one hour on this matter. We forgot our own interest to consider that of Canadians. However, our own motion was important and today the co-operation and respect between parties has suffered a severe blow.

Mr. Speaker, our party is obviously deeply interested in safeguarding our environment as well as the living conditions of the Canadian people. We regret, as I said during the statement of the hon. Secretary of State for External