

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, April 4, 1989

[Editor's Note: Continuation of proceedings from Volume A.]

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SITTING RESUMED

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

### MOTION TO ADJOURN UNDER S.O. 52

[English]

#### ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

##### VALDEZ OIL SPILL

**Mr. Speaker:** The Chair has granted leave to the Hon. Member for Skeena to move the adjournment of the House pursuant to Standing Order 52 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter requiring urgent consideration, namely, the oil spill which occurred outside the Port of Valdez. Accordingly the motion is as follows: Mr. Fulton, seconded by Mr. Riis, moves "That this House do now adjourn".

I should say to Hon. Members and the public that in effect this is an emergency debate which has been applied for and has been granted by the Chair with respect to the oil spill in Alaska and its consequences, possible or otherwise. Accordingly that is why we are debating tonight when ordinarily we do not sit in the evenings. I recognize the Hon. Member for Skeena.

**Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena)** moved:

That this House do now adjourn.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I think this is a very important and timely emergency debate not only because of the pending problems that coastal life is having right now as a result of the Alaska spill, but in relation to a number of other spills that have occurred recently on the west coast of North America affecting British Columbia.

It is important to have an historical understanding of how the Port of Valdez came to be where it is and why the north slope crude is coming from there and on down the west coast of North America. It was in 1972 that this debate was really in full flight in British Columbia. Of course the consensus among British Columbians at that

time, including that of the then Premier of British Columbia, the present Hon. Member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca (Mr. Barrett), was that there should not be tanker traffic down the west coast of North America carrying that crude. There were other suggested means of moving that oil, rail being one example.

We know that at that time it was reported quite widely in Canada that the U.S. Coast Guard predicted that there would be two million litres of spills annually on the west coast of North America as a result of this route having been chosen from Valdez out of Prince William Sound, down the coast of British Columbia to the ports in the northern United States, in California, and some down through Panama. However, a decision was made to go ahead and construct the port and to start moving U.S. flag tankers. They move only under the Jones Act. These are American flag and crude vessels.

We have seen a series of catastrophes in the last 18 months. I think it is important that we have that in chronological context before dealing specifically with the Valdez spill.

The most recent and the worst is the Exxon *Valdez* spill. Prior to that there was a 186-tonne spill from the barge that was going into Grays Harbour on December 22, 1988, which ended up on the west coast of Vancouver Island.

Prior to that, on October 4, 1987, a vessel known as the *Stuyvesant* spilled 600,000 gallons into the water off the Queen Charlotte Islands, but it drifted westward and did not come on to the shores of the Queen Charlotte Islands. However, it is interesting that this this same vessel, the *Stuyvesant*, continued to ply those waters, and I quote from the material provided to me by the Library of Parliament:

For the second time during 1987, the U.S. tanker *Stuyvesant* sustained structural damage in heavy weather while departing Valdez, Alaska, en route to Puerto Amuerelles, Panama, and spilled more than 600,000 gallons of Alaskan crude oil into the Gulf of Alaska. This is the first time that a single ship has been responsible for the two largest oil spills off the U.S. coast in a single calendar year. It is also the first time that a single ship has caused two major spills in the same geographical region for the same general reason within a relatively short period of time—less than ten months.