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The Minister talks about the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) being recognized around the world as an expert on preventing pollution. We heard a technical response tonight concerning the number of boats we have that do not have holes and are available to do the job. We are told about equipment in various warehouses. This letter was not even acknowledged by the Minister.

For the Minister to get up in the House and give that pious, sanctimonious camp in front of all Canadians and expect us to believe that he understands what this is about is nothing more than straight hogwash. I wish I knew how to say that in French, but it is hogwash. You are a failure, Mr. Minister. I say that through the Chair, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister should resign or be fired immediately. If there is to be any confidence left in the Canadian people that the Government is serious about dealing with oil spills, let us get a Minister who understands something more about an oil spill. The only slick he knows is on his pillow when he gets up in the morning.

The Minister stood here tonight and gave us a catalogue of actions that should be taken. He said there was an immediate response to the little spill on Vancouver Island to which he referred. The troops at Esquimalt Base were ready to go up there on the coast. They were waiting for the call from the Minister and the Government, but no call came. Seventy-five troops could have been on the ground within 48 hours, but no call came. Tell us why. We had to rely on volunteers, and they were treated very badly.

Let the Minister tell us about his trip there. Tell us how you spent time walking on the beach as the Minister symbolically representing the Government, showing yourself and letting people know you were concerned about that oil spill. Tell us how it struck you deep in the heart and how it concerned you so much that you asked for an inquiry. The Minister has not done a thing about it.

Furthermore, there is a joint contingency plan with the United States. There is already in place an international agreement. The United States Coast Guard was ready, on call, and willing to help with all its mobilized equipment, talent and skill. It never received a call from the Government or the Minister for the help it was ready to give.

The case against the Minister is concluded, in my view. If Canadians had a vote about it, the Minister would be guilty as a failure. There is not much point talking to him about this, even through you, Mr. Speaker.

Let us go back into some history. There are some Members in the House tonight who were here in the late 1960s. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner) was one of those Members. The Alyeska-Alaska pipeline was the subject of a major debate in those days. One of the few Members in this Chamber, along with other Members of the New Democratic Party and a certain Member from Vancouver South who cannot be named, understood the dangers of moving that oil down the coast. One of those Members was the former Minister of Finance in the Liberal administration. He acknowledged publicly that there was serious concern about shipping oil off that coast. The Member for Vancouver South acknowledged that. However, they were not persuasive enough to stop the Government of the day from agreeing to that coastal shipment of tankers. However, both those Members had foresight. They expressed and put on record their concern, and I double-checked that.

• (2220)

When there was the expectation of a spill, most people said that it was just scare-mongerers who were suggesting that. A few Members including the two I have mentioned said that it is more than a scare. This is the one time I am sorry history has proved that those two Members were right, along with NDP Members.

At the same time there was a debate happening in the British Columbia legislature. We begged, we literally begged the federal Government to oppose the oil tankers travelling off our coast. We were challenged as a Government to come up with an alternative in response. We did. We suggested that the oil be moved by rail. We called in Cecil Law of Queen's University, an expert on ground-guided transportation, and we developed and proposed a plan and I went to Washington, D.C., to sell it. It was laughed at by all except for a few Members here. It is gone, it is over. It is one of those situations in which I can honestly say, I told you so.

But that is history. We must understand that history to know that there were voices in this Chamber who warned some 22 years ago that this exact thing would happen. Now we are struck by the fact that we are having an emergency debate on the very accident some said could not happen.

For all this pious claptrap from the Ministers who say, "Our experts tell us this and our experts tell us that," the Exxon experts told us this could not happen. I saw the first interview of the Exxon president on United States public television. He was saying that this did not happen, he does not believe it, it could not happen. It did happen and it will happen again.