

Private Members' Business

amendment to the Canada Shipping Act and in particular with regard to tanker traffic. People who live on the islands and on the coast know how quickly an oil spill can spread, what degree of devastation it can cause and what impact it has on marine and land life on and around those islands.

I talked to the Vancouver port authorities today and there has been an increasing number of ship arrivals over the years. Vancouver and Victoria are growing. The government members want to remind us that we are a trading nation. One just has to live in a port to know how true that is.

In the last year there were over 3,000 ship arrivals in the port of Vancouver. As the islands lie between Vancouver Island and the British Columbia mainland those ships must go through those Gulf Islands. There is often a back-up in the port of Vancouver. Obviously all those boats cannot tie up at the same time. They have to wait for their place of moorage in the port of Vancouver.

• (1715)

Oftentimes what happens is that those ships have to lie at anchor either in English Bay just off Vancouver or in the protected bays throughout the Gulf Islands. Many times I have seen the row boats come off the freighters and go into the communities to buy their groceries and go to the pubs on the Gulf Islands. They are welcome visitors by many island businesses but there has to be an environmental assessment of the impact of them.

We have seen in our coastal communities the horrors that flow from the bilges of some of these tankers. Under cover of darkness they open the bilges and what we have is another spill. It may not all be oil but there are certainly oily components to it.

This comes back to consultation with the communities. We have to know that the responsible management of our environment is in good hands. That is only done when the community involved is consulted and respected in its decision. The chamber of commerce from Ganges, the chamber of commerce from Mayne Island or the Pender Island folks talk about the benefits to their communities of having those freighters moored off their islands. We also have to talk about the fragility of those waters.

Jacques Cousteau remarked over 20 years ago on the very special qualities of the Gulf Islands. In fact he was one of the first to suggest that a marine park should be

established within those waters. They are internationally acclaimed as special waters. We cannot just allow ships from all over the world to drop anchor with no environmental assessment. This is where the federal government has a responsibility. If we do not do it as a federal authority who is to do it?

We have the Islands Trust that is overburdened already with the difficulties I described earlier in my remarks. It is like putting out fires. It is oppressed by the work load and by the difficulties of the growth pressures that confront it. We at the federal level, the most senior government, have the responsibility to give it the resources and to give the Canadian Coast Guard the resources to monitor.

It is all very well to have legislation in place, but unless we have the resources to back up the legislation enforcement is a farce. We must give the communities some reason to have faith in the system.

On Pender Island, the Rogers Cantel tower has certainly bruised confidence in the system. A David and Goliath scenario is being played out. I hope my cynicism that Goliath will win is wrong. I hope David will succeed, the residents of Pender Island being David in this instance.

Ship and freighter anchorages in the Gulf Islands are something we have to take responsibility for. I hope other speakers will recognize the fragility of the Gulf Islands and our desire to preserve them for future generations.

Mr. Lee Richardson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for raising this issue in such a responsible manner. She made some very good points and expressed the concerns of many constituents on the west coast. It was somewhat fortuitous that the hon. member was able to join us this morning in the discussion on the bill she mentioned in her address, Bill C-121, which is an amendment to the Canada Shipping Act. There are a number of clauses in that bill we will be reviewing tomorrow in committee that will assist in the very points she raises today.

• (1720)

I was appreciative of her comments with regard to our Coast Guard in Canada. From a personal point of view perhaps in this case a little cynicism is a good thing if it keeps people on their toes. I think she will agree with me