

*Oil and Gas Act*

This does not mean pollution will take place, but if the drilling-rig involved had struck oil, the damage would have been immense.

If one adds to this the problem of breaks in the submerged pipelines serving these offshore units, the magnitude of the potential for environmental contamination becomes clear. Such underwater pipelines have been broken by ice action at a water depth of 250 feet.

These are interesting comments by someone who has checked into the possibilities that could occur from oil drilling in these areas. There is a host of other interesting material in this brief. I suggest that every member of this House read and study it. The problem is, what has the Canadian government done to ensure that the type of pollution which this researcher is talking about does not take place? What have we done to investigate and implement some safeguards?

The Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development recently checked into the sinking of a supply barge in the Arctic. In fact, a couple of supply barges were sunk. We do not know fully what they contained. I understand one contained oil and the other contained some type of supplies. I have a question on the Order Paper at the present time requesting information on the supplies which were lost. This is another matter which should be considered by the department concerned. Perhaps the means of transportation is not adequate. Are proper safeguards being taken by the companies transporting supplies and goods from the mainland to the Arctic islands? Many of these supplies are flown in, but some are brought in by barge. Research programs should investigate designs, etc., of Arctic transportation. This matter should be very carefully checked. There should be regulations to ensure that Arctic waters are not polluted because a company does not have adequate knowledge of the type of transportation it should use in these areas.

There are many other problems in connection with oil. I have examined a few of them. Contingency plans are supposed to be available in the event of oil contamination anywhere off the east, west or north coast of Canada. Adequate contingency plans should be available. Unless such plans are available, and we have equipment that can be used to nullify the effects of these spills, we should be very careful how we go about laying out huge areas for oil and gas exploration. It would be very simple to cause irreparable damage to the ecology of our country when looking for gas and oil.

[Mr. Harding.]

I have just one or two more points to make Mr. Speaker. Other members in our group will deal with other aspects of the bill. I want to mention one point in passing. It seems there has been mixed jurisdiction as far as the continental shelf is concerned. A Supreme Court decision indicated that the continental shelf off the west coast of Canada came under federal jurisdiction.

• (3:10 p.m.)

I presume there will be a similar test as far as the continental shelf off the east coast of Canada is concerned. Provinces do not easily give up the hope of their right to exploit what is potentially a source of great mineral wealth. In a sense one cannot blame them. But it is important that the necessary regulations be laid down. As has been pointed out today, a situation has developed in which both federal and provincial governments are receiving payment from oil companies in respect of leases. This is nonsense. Jurisdiction must be either federal or provincial.

The regulations laid down to protect the natural environment must be strict, and they must be uniform throughout Canada. I suggest to hon. members and to those piloting this measure through the House that there must be no delay in establishing the necessary regulations so that this bill and companion measures shall, indeed, protect every section of our continental shelf as well as the shores which would suffer the full consequences of any oil spill.

Blame for delay in establishing these regulations must rest with the department responsible. Good and effective regulations must be drafted. Along with this work must go sound research to ensure that the companies concerned are using the right kind of drilling equipment, not material which over a period of time will rust and allow pollution to occur. There are many vital interests to protect. The fishery is one. Tremendous damage could be done to water fowl which nest in the north. These are things too precious to be lost, yet there is a risk of losing them if we are not vigilant, if we fail to take the measures which need to be taken.

In closing, may I say I am pleased that the bill will go to the committee on national resources for study and comment. I do not say this because I happen to be a member of that committee but because I believe this is the committee which should deal with the subject. It has already been considering the question of pollution on a wider basis, and I