

Water Pollution

real way and in the spirit of the Canadian way, and put before us the documents which in fact exist.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Order, please. Ordinarily I would recognize the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. Tobin), but I understand he has allowed his place to stand in favour of the hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich (Mr. Munro).

Mr. Donald W. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues on the other side of the House for ceding their place in my favour because of a prior commitment which I have at six o'clock.

I do not share the political biases expressed so vividly by the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Fulton). At the same time I rise to support the request he made in this motion for the production of papers connected with the permit. Indeed, I would have preferred seeing this request broadened to include all papers related to the issuance of the permit.

There has been a controversy over the permit issued to Amax for a long time, at least two years to my knowledge. We know influence peddling when we see it. We saw it recently in the designation of certain executive assistants and the special privileges allotted to them, but there is more in this matter than just influence peddling. There is the entire matter of the environmental concerns surrounding this operation. It is time we had all the papers before us to settle once and for all the argument which has gone on altogether too long.

In a matter of this sort we should return to the fundamentals. Any human disturbance of the environment or the status quo in the physical world cannot fail to have consequences of one sort or another. Even the employment of horses to draw vehicles in public streets had environmental consequences which involved social and economic costs to repair. Our parents were prepared to pay those costs. The problem which must be solved, both in general and in particular, whenever a matter of environmental disturbance comes before us is whether the economic and social costs are too heavy to bear, taking into account the social, economic and, in this particular instance, the military consequences of failing to proceed with the development or to proceed with it in a more costly way. This is a difficult formula to work out but I submit it is one under which we will either have development or will not have development.

● (1720)

Let us consider the problem of acid rain. The cost of proceeding as we are now will be high. We may not even be able to calculate that cost at present. Just because that cost will fall upon the generation that is to follow is no reason that we should ignore it today. Certainly the cost of preventing acid rain will be high. We must ask ourselves whether we are prepared to bear that cost today and in the future so that we may leave to the generation that follows an environment of which we can be relatively proud. That consideration of whether we should defer costs to the next generation or face them today must enter into a formula of this kind. We would like to

bequeath to our children both clean environmental standards—and this matter was raised by the hon. member for Skeena—and a morality that looks beyond our pocketbook.

I favour production of these papers because we cannot possibly work toward that formula until we have all the facts before us—not just the possibility of influence peddling but also the scientific facts and the social impacts that will be felt. One way to achieve that is through a public inquiry. The hon. member for Skeena pointed out that the permit was issued in the midst of an election. There was no public inquiry.

There is no question that costs are involved and Amax may be able to meet those costs. On the other hand, they may be so high that Amax may have to look for its molybdenum elsewhere.

I deplore any suggestion that Amax is being picked on just because it happens to have an operation in Namibia. Some of the attacks on Amax imply that. Amax has a permit and has been a responsible operator. In May of this year when there was a break in the tailings line, the company stopped operations. That indicates it has operated within the limits of its permit. If the permit was wrongfully issued or if there was no other way of removing the tailings, those matters should be examined.

There is a good deal of evidence on my file that it would be much more expensive and have much longer term consequences if those tailings were deposited on land and allowed to leach into Alice Arm than is the case at present when they are being taken down well below the surface and allowed to settle in an area which actually forms a pocket at the bottom of Alice Arm.

When considering the effect of depositing those tailings in the marine environment, I think we should also take into account the fact that many years ago there was an operation at the Kitsu mine and the tailings went into Alice Arm. It is true that at that time we did not have the same notion of the environment that we have today, so to that extent there has been progress. There was not full recognition of the environmental impacts before that permit was issued. I have evidence on my file from the Department of the Environment which indicates that the measures taken into account at the time of the issuance of that permit were all that needed to be taken into account—the toxicity, the amount of clouding or whatever the terminology is, of the tailings and the fineness of the grind were all up to the standards set by the Department of the Environment.

We also know of the objections raised by the Nishga council. I have been led to understand that they were offered employment opportunities at the mine—again, a demonstration of responsible corporate citizenship—but I understand that those offers were put aside, if not rejected. There seems to be some indication that another form of recompense was sought by the Nishga. These facts ought to come out so that we can judge whether the permit was properly issued in the first place.