

sort of real politics and theatrics which some of his colleagues and others have displayed here tonight, (on the other side at both ends.)

I would like the people of Canada, particularly those in B.C., the people of Alaska and the rest of the United States to know that this problem is shared by all Canadians, certainly by those from the Atlantic provinces, particularly New Brunswick from where I come. It is not difficult to imagine what such a spill as the Valdez disaster would entail if it were to have happened in the Bay of Fundy or in the Atlantic Ocean off Newfoundland. As a former Minister of Natural Resources in New Brunswick, I can comprehend, so can the citizens of our province, what such a tragedy would do to the migration of the Atlantic salmon and the impact it would have on the generations of fish for years to come. It is not difficult to imagine the unimaginable. We can understand the grim reality that such a spill does impose upon the natural sea and coastal resources of Alaska and the northern Pacific coast.

We can and do sympathize with the people from those areas who have suffered. We do understand and share the concerns, the fears and the worries of our fellow citizens in British Columbia.

Like Chernobyl, and Bhopal, the Valdez spill has put the priority of the environment into stark perspective. It makes us realize how much we have to accomplish here in Canada and in North America as well as throughout the world. This debate has also put the subject of the environment into a political perspective in this House.

It seems that we have two choices about the environment in political terms. We can idealize, dramatize and harangue for resignations, as the Hon. Member Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca (Mr. Barrett) did. In my opinion, invoking vulgarities almost in his slang in his attack on the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Bouchard) is unbecoming of a former Premier of a province such as British Columbia and it makes it difficult to understand that he would really be concerned about anything but the theatrical opportunity this debate represented.

The second choice we have is to acknowledge, as the Minister of the Environment said, I thought sincerely and humbly, so genuinely beseechingly to all Members of the House, that the environment is a special priority that transcends partisan politics. We can acknowledge that we are all part of the environmental problem and we can understand that we must all be part of the environmental solution.

I think that if we were to take the context of the remarks tonight of the Hon. Member for Skeena and

the Hon. Minister of the Environment and remove partisan politics we would find that they have collectively made a contribution in this debate about a disaster that does not really even involve so far Canadian soil or water. It does not matter whether it does or not, for the debate is well merited. The interventions sparked by the Hon. Member from Skeena and the Minister of the Environment taken collectively do constitute a contribution in addressing the subject of the environment in the broad context, and one from which we all can learn.

I hope we can learn in this House to approach this subject (Environment) in a collective concerned fashion with criticism, of course, with examination and a healthy debate, but with the goal of sustainable development always before us. Sustainable development will be difficult to achieve. There are great risks to be assessed. There are great trade-offs to be made. There is reality to address.

I believe the Government has been clear before the Valdez disaster. At the Hague conference, the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and the Minister of the Environment demonstrated in a world context the priority of the environment to the Canadian Government. I believe that yesterday's Throne Speech has also been a very clear and strong statement in that same direction. I urge all Hon. Members to take the perspective of constructive debate and the goal of sustainable development for our environment as the cause for all of us. I believe that we shall be successful in making progress toward that elusive objective of sustainable development in this country, and we shall be an example to other countries of the world to follow.

• (2350)

Mr. Raymond Skelly (North Island—Powell River): Mr. Speaker, one of the interesting aspects of the evening here is the suggestion that politics should be removed from the House of Commons. It is an interesting and intriguing approach.

I always used to think of politics as the process of allocating scarce and valuable resources and to do just that. There are differences of opinion, debates, and different points of view.

The people who live on Vancouver Island and particularly on North Island—Powell River do not believe that the government allocated sufficient resources to protect their environment in last fall's oil spill. If one goes to any single community, it can be found that those people fault this Government for an inappropriate response. I simply convey that message to the House.