

I am particularly pleased that we are in a position to come forward at this time to accede to these conventions as, in my past life, I was involved on the international side of attempting to get these conventions in place.

Honourable senators, as you know, the Public Review Panel on Tanker Safety and Marine Spills Response Capability, in its November 1990 final report, made 107 recommendations concerning Canada's ability to prevent and respond to marine spills. Not all the panel's recommendations have required new legislation, and indeed the government has taken action to address the majority of the panel's concerns.

I would stress, however, that this legislation is but one piece of a much larger puzzle—the piece which focuses on response to spills. I will leave it to one of my colleagues to speak in the future on all the other initiatives the government has undertaken in areas such as spill prevention.

Honourable senators, in closing, it may be appropriate to refer to the comments, both formal and informal, of witnesses who appeared recently before a parliamentary committee examining this legislation. It is a rare pleasure to be able to report that, with respect to this bill, government, industry and environmental interests have spoken with one voice saying, "Pass this legislation. Put in place the new regime for spill response. Continue the work of protecting our waters."

These are wise words, indeed, and words which I would urge honourable senators to consider carefully.

**Hon. Raymond J. Perrault:** Honourable senators, this is the first formal opportunity that I have had to welcome to the chamber Senator Andreychuk. I thank her for her remarks in support of this bill. I agree with most of the sentiments expressed in Senator Andreychuk's speech. Our concern on this side is that the bill has had an unduly long gestation period. It really constitutes the first cautious and timorous steps toward providing the kind of protection that Canadian waters must have.

We often talk about Canada being a nation from sea to sea. Why, then, are we not in the forefront of the world in advancing those measures which will protect international waters, and our waters and all waters through which ships must pass? We have not been in the lead. We have been dragging behind many other jurisdictions. I find it alarming that we have been left behind on so many of these major initiatives.

For example, over 90 per cent of all foreign oil tankers in American waters are inspected by the U.S. government. The figure in Canada is something like 25 per cent. Why is that? Is it a matter of the government adopting the view that we should cut back on non-essentials? Surely it is essential that we have tanker safety in our waters. We do not find any mandatory provisions in this bill before us to ensure that those are safe tankers which ply our waters.

Just after New Year's Day this year, Canadians were horrified to watch CTV and *Newsworld* as they portrayed the destruction of the ship *Braer* off the coast of the Shetland Islands. Huge quantities of oil spilled on an ecologically sensitive area of the world. We saw on television the scenes of devastation to the environment and the wildlife, the pitiful plight of birds and fish and other products of nature entrapped in the oil slick that followed the destruction of that ship.

• (1610)

I am sure many Canadians relaxed and said, "It is awful and terrible, but thank the Lord it did not happen in Canadian waters." But it is a sobering fact, honourable senators, that at the same time the *Braer* was being broken up on the shores of Scotland, its sister ship was in Canadian waters suffering a mechanical breakdown, and the *Braer* itself was destined for Canadian waters on that particular, fatal voyage.

The destruction occurred as a result of mechanical failure on the ship, followed by its being tossed against the rocks by high seas, an experience that could easily have happened a short few hours or days later off the coast of Canada instead of Scotland. That is the worry. It was exactly the kind of disaster that led to the establishment of the Public Review Panel on Tanker Safety and Marine Spills Response Capability.

I remember a visit we had to the Woods Hole Institute under the leadership of Senator Marshall about three years ago. People at the Woods Hole Institute in Massachusetts said they were seriously concerned about what was happening to the Atlantic Ocean. Our most valuable species of fish were disappearing in vast numbers. We were shown graphic evidence of the decline in productive Atlantic species from a high on a graph, down, down, down, a small blip up, and then continuing down. Many people theorize that the decline is due to pollution in the Atlantic Ocean. This is a view, of course, as honourable senators know, held by Jacques Cousteau.

We must reflect on the nature of this problem. It is not a partisan issue at all. I agree with most of the measures contained in this bill. I am prepared to support them, but the serious situation in the oceans of the world today indicate that we must go far beyond the bill before us.

We remember the *Exxon Valdez* disaster. It produced an unbelievable situation in Alaska. We have had oil spills along the West Coast of Canada, my home province of British Columbia. One of the recommendations of that Brander-Smith review panel report was that we do much more to improve the double-hulling of the world's tanker fleets.

This legislation focuses on the very worthy matter of what we do in the event of a spill, described eloquently by Senator Andreychuk. How do we build a response capability? How do we pay for it? These are all important questions.