

in the long run. We have to come to the point where we take the same moral offence at those kinds of actions as we do at criminal acts of individuals. At some point we cannot just regard it as the price of doing business. We cannot just regard it as the price of a smoothly running economy. At some point we will have to realize that there is too much of a cost to pay, both in the short term and in the long term.

Let us consider the cost to taxpayers of having to rip up whole sections of the Trans-Canada Highway or of having to repair, whenever we get around to it, all the environmental damage which has been done in the name of short-term expediency, of the need of a particular company to be competitive with its competitors or of the need for a Crown corporation to realize a certain profit in order to maintain its credit rating. All these rather abstract economic indicators, I maintain, have been used over the years as grounds for doing things which have real physical consequences for the environment, for people and, as I said before, for non-human creation.

I see the Minister of Transport (Mr. Mazankowski) in the House. I hope he will be speaking later about how he sees his departmental responsibilities in terms of this particular spill. I hope he will be commenting critically—and I think it would be useful for him to do so—on the role that provincial jurisdiction has played in the matter and the way in which, by giving over too much of the responsibility for these kinds of spills to provinces, the federal Government finds itself in a position which, it either likes or dislikes, but which in any event, is a position in which they have not felt the freedom to be as involved in this event as they should have been and as many other people believed they should have been. We have mixed messages from the Government as to the question of jurisdiction, not only federal and provincial jurisdiction, but as to whom within the federal Government had jurisdiction for these kinds of events.

● (1500)

I look forward to hearing the Minister of Transport (Mr. Mazankowski) on this subject. If one thing is clear from all this, it is that the Ontario Ministry of the Environment has clearly bungled its responsibility. It did not take it seriously in the first place. It then proceeded to make a number of errors with regard to the information it gave out on the hotline for those who telephoned because they suspected they may have been exposed to the PCBs on the highway, the attitude toward the family who were exposed to the PCBs directly, and the attitude it took toward existing regulations in sending soil samples through Winnipeg to the Department in Ontario that were not clearly marked. We now have air cargo workers quite rightly complaining that they should at least have been told what they were handling. These kinds of things point clearly to the fact that the Ontario Ministry of the Environment was not doing its job.

If there is no legal recourse, as well there may not be, there is at least political recourse. It is time for that political recourse to take effect in Ontario. For five years the Government of Ontario has had a piece of legislation passed by the

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Ontario Legislature waiting to be proclaimed. It would have dealt with the very kind of event we now have in the form of that PCB spill in Kenora. For five years the so-called "Spills Bill" has been waiting to be proclaimed by the Ontario Progressive Conservative Government, and no action. If there was ever an example of rank neglect of the need to proceed with the kind of legislation that everyone thinks is necessary, whether it be the federal Progressive Conservatives, federal Liberals, provincial New Democrats, you could not find anyone other than the Ontario Tories who thought there was any wisdom in not proclaiming that piece of legislation. As I say, it has been around for five years.

I am really outraged and offended. When I get up to speak about this, I am not putting it on for the cameras or that sort of thing. For years the Ontario Government has demonstrated this kind of attitude toward the environment. Long before I ever ran for office, the Ontario Government deliberately turned a blind eye year after year to the fact that all kinds of people were pointing out that the pulp and paper mill in Dryden was poisoning the English-Wabigoon River system by allowing mercury to enter that system. That was having harmful effects on the fish in that river system and on the native people who made their living off that system.

What did the Ontario Tories do for years and years? The same Tories who are now running for election did absolutely nothing. They waited until that paper mill was taken over by another company. Now there are so many legal hassles as to who is responsible and who is not that there is no chance of anyone being brought to justice with respect to that ecological crime. We are talking about an ecological crime. We need to begin to talk about ecological crimes in this country.

The Ontario Government has been allowed in many cases to perpetrate or to allow those kinds of crimes without having to pay the political price. Who knows whether they will pay it this time around, but some day the political price will be paid. Some day Canadians will arrive at the point where they will not tolerate Governments that are lackadaisical about environmental matters. They will not tolerate Governments that are so short-sighted as to think that the short-term economic consequences of strict environmental regulations are more costly than the long-term consequences of not having those kinds of environmental regulations. I look forward to that day.

I wanted to say what I have had to say because it is important if only for a moment to get above this particular event and think about the over-all political picture and the need for Governments everywhere to be more sensitive to environment issues. If there is one Government that is particularly open to criticism on this in terms of what we have learned from this PCB spill, it is the Ontario Progressive Conservative Government. It has a history of not being sensitive to those kinds of things. It listens to the voice of the corporate ledger instead of the voice of the river, the native people or the fish. It listens to the voices of those who would have Governments think only in the short term and not the long term. That is where we have to go.