

*Proceedings on Adjournment Motion*

Further on he said:

One or two other illustrations may help to reinforce my contention. For example, it is clear that the coastguard will have to play a major role in terms of carrying out these responsibilities.

Mr. Speaker, in the immediate area of this onslaught of oil onto the glorious beaches of Vancouver Island there exist two installations of the Canadian Coastguard, in the form of a lifeboat station at Tofino and one farther down the coast at Bamfield. I submit that in light of action previously taken by the department, the minister's recent emphasis on facilities and expertise within his ministry and the role of the coastguard in the circumstances I have been describing, the minister must recognize responsibility in this area.

● (10:20 p.m.)

Some rather graphic pictures reached me in the mail today. I suggest that this kind of thing should not be left completely, as appears to have been the situation in this case, to high school children in the area. I give them full credit. These pictures show how hard they worked in cleaning up this heavy mass of gobs of oil from the beach.

This fact should be underlined by the recommendation contained in the report of the task force, volume I, at page 9, which states among other things:

We recommend that the Minister of Transport have the responsibility for dealing with pollution arising from oil spilled in water when the extent and nature of the spill makes it a federal responsibility.

This is what my question is all about. I wanted to know the nature and extent of this pollution, what coordinating role the government has been playing and the element of expertise the Department of Transport has brought to bear on this problem.

**Mr. Gérard Duquet (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to reply to the subject matter raised by the hon. member for

Comox-Alberni (Mr. Barnett). I know of his keen interest in pollution problems, whether they be of a specific nature—as in the case of the small slick that came ashore near Tofino—or in a general way, and I recall his amendments to the recent government bill relating to the Canada Shipping Act. The hon. member has made his views known many times in this House and before the standing committee on transport. I hope I can clarify some of the questions tonight in the limited time that is available.

Only in recent years has the Canadian public become fully aware of the disastrous effect on the coastal environment when oil in considerable quantities comes ashore. The unfortunate *Arrow* accident has dramatized this fact. It also dramatized the tremendous expense in funds and manpower to effect a proper clean-up of properties and land. In the specific case of the oil traces which came ashore in the area known as Chesterman Beach, near Tofino, the amount involved was very small. The origin of the oil is unknown. It could have come from any number of ships using the Pacific waters or, indeed, even from a shore installation or other sources. The clean-up was undertaken by a group of school students who completed the job in a very short time.

As a straight matter of responsibility to act in such circumstances, there is no hard and fast rule. Canada has thousands of miles of coastline and it would be impossible, even if it were deemed desirable, to assume responsibility for every trace of oil that came ashore. As in the case at Tofino, where the incident cannot be said to be beyond the resources of local authorities or private interests, it is customary and it has been the practice for clean-up to be undertaken at the local level. In the case of Chedabucto Bay, which was referred to, the federal government assumed responsibility to deal with this incident, and it would no doubt do so again in a case of such catastrophic proportions.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.25 p.m.