

Bunker kills

Arrow oil clogs shoreline

Arichat, N.S. — Not too many people outside of Cape Breton had ever heard of this little fishing village until several weeks ago. Now Arichat is world famous, for it is off Arichat that the Liverian tanker Arrow ran aground, broke up, and eventually sank, disgorging her cargo of bunker C oil into Chedabucto Bay.

It is almost two weeks now since the grounding of the Arrow, on Feb. 4, but the people of Arichat will remember it for many years. The beaches around Arichat will bear witness to it for many months. Arichat has joined the growing number of communities that have been devastated by oil pollution in recent years.

There was no need for this tragedy. Preventative action on the part of several parties could have prevented the damage done by the bunker C. Blame for the mishap has not officially been placed, but it is plain that it does not rest on any one head.

The captain of the tanker is rightfully coming under fire for bringing the Arrow into port with outdated and non-operative navigational equipment. The role of the Department of Transport in the accident is also being investigated. There is supposed to be a buoy with a flashing rod

light marking Cerberus Rock, where the Arrow grounded. It was removed earlier this year by the D.O.T. who say it was removed to protect it from ice damage, and that this is done every year. Fishermen in the area say that this is the first year the buoy was removed. In any event the buoy was replaced with a spar buoy, a ten foot long pole, which is very hard to see in dim light. The Arrow was using Canadian government navigational charts. These showed that there was a buoy with a flashing light marking the rock. In searching for this the Arrow ran onto Cerberus Rock, named after the three headed dog that was supposed to have guarded the entrance to Hades.

Of course the immediate concern after the grounding was not whose fault the accident had been, but what to do about the oil leaking into the bay, and the oil remaining aboard the Arrow. At this stage of the game more thought was given to salvage than to conservation, although at this time the effects of the oil were minimal and it was felt that the danger would be removed if the oil on board the Arrow was removed.

The first plans called for pumping off the oil and salvaging of the stern section. The bow section was writ-

ten off early in the game as unsalvageable. The salvage crew soon ran against the stubborn nature of Bunker C. The sludgy oil cannot be moved with ease at temperatures under 80 to 90 degrees. Of course the oil had cooled off rather rapidly in the icy waters of Chedabucto Bay. Plans to steam heat the oil were squashed by dry boilers and inoperable water pumps.

by
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However some action was taken by Imperial Oil. They called in one of the leading ecologists in the area, Dr. Richard Warner of Memorial University of Newfoundland. Experts in the field of marine pollution soon made their way to Cape Breton.

On the Saturday after the accident the Minister of Transport, Donald Jamieson, stated that the Department of Transport was in charge of the accident area and that the tanker would be bombed, strafed, dynamited towed out to sea, or some other stupid thing. Needless to say, no one at the scene of the disaster paid much attention to the speeches of the minister 800 miles away in Ottawa. While the D.O.T. may have been in charge on Saturday, someone neglected to inform the D.O.T. official at the scene until Monday afternoon, or so it seems.

Meanwhile major oil slicks appeared on the coast across from Arichat, and along the shores of the mainland on the other side of Chedabucto Bay.

On Saturday afternoon an event occurred that changed the entire outlook on the situation. The Arrow, after grinding on Cerberus Rock for three days broke in half. The bow section was, and still is, grounded firmly on the rock, but the stern section shifted slightly, and continued shifting for another five days until it sank in 80 feet of water. This caused an even greater oil spillage. By Sunday heavy pollution was reported at Cape Hogan, across from Arichat; West Arichat; Janvrin Island, north of

Arichat; and areas of the mainland west of the town of Canso. In all, approximately 20 miles of shoreline were polluted by this time. On Monday tests were carried out with both U.S. Army flamethrowers and a product flown up by the Corning Glass works. The flamethrowers were not very successful, but the SeaBeads from Corning worked. They are small rough glass beads that provide a surface for the oil to burn on when spread on the oil, soaked in benzene, and ignited. They warm the surface of the oil, and the oil flows up the crevices in the beads by capillary action. Here it is burned. The process continues until all the oil is burned. The beads may then be scooped up and used again. While the SeaBeads were successfully tested on Monday, they were not used until Friday. All this time more oil leaked out of the tanker and on to the beaches.

One of the reasons for the delay was the limited supply of SeaBeads, but even the small amount available could have been put to use. Another chemical, corexit, a sort of super-detergent was available, but on the advice of Dr. Warner, this was not used, as it harms marine life more than the oil.

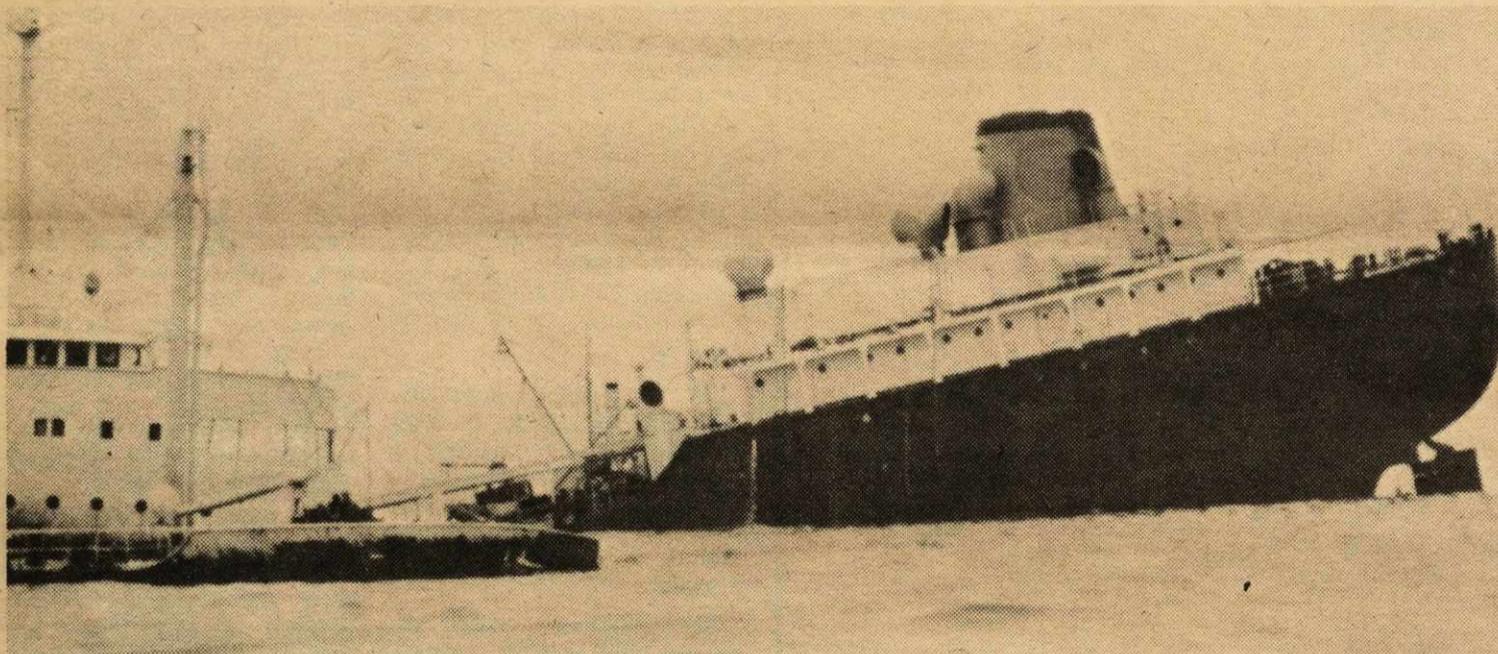
The effects of the Arrow disaster may never be known fully. Even now the shoreline is being cleaned up, but oil will remain for sometime yet. An estimated 3,000 birds were killed by the thick black bunker oil. There is still a huge oil slick somewhere at sea that can come ashore anywhere.

What action is the government taking? An immediate response was the introduction of a bill raising the marine pollution fine from \$1,000 a day to \$5,000. This, however, is not a deterrent or a preventative measure.

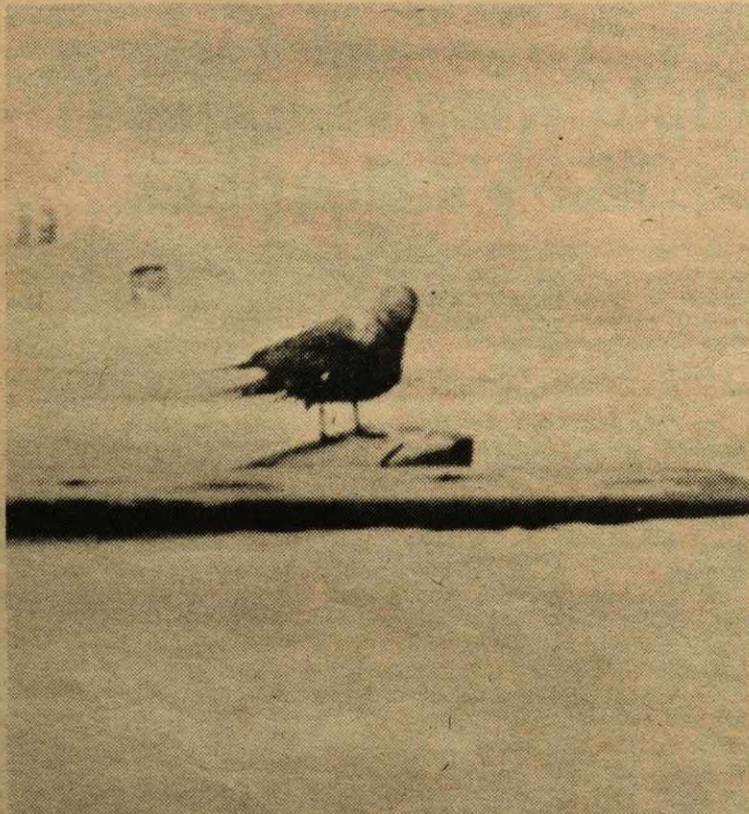
There are several concrete things the government can and should do. Strict inspections should be made of all foreign ships carrying cargos in Canadian waters, especially with regard to navigational equipment. Cerberus Rock should be better marked, or preferably blown up. Pollution control centres should be set up to handle such situations.

The fish plant at Petit-de-Grat employs 450 people. It may have to shut down. Almost all of the 2,000 people of Arichat depend on fishing and lobster potting. There may not be a lobster season at Arichat this year.

In a few years giant supertankers will be using the same channel as the ill-fated Arrow. Hopefully, this disaster is not a preview of things to come.



The Arrow on Cerberus Rock



Cruddy duck — now dead in Art College



Beaches black with thick bunker crud