

*Environmental Affairs*

said to Mr. Train. The minister is reported in the press as having said that the Mackenzie is our "trump card"; presumably this is in connection with using the Mackenzie corridor as an alternative to the tanker route.

The minister goes on to say, as reported in the press, that he personally does not think that these great oil tankers will be moving in the critical areas off the west coast, but there is no indication in the statement he made today why he believes that. I would remind all hon. members that it is very dangerous for ministers to make statements indicating that a danger that the public is aware of is not in fact a danger. I would remind the minister that statements along the same line have been made in connection with the Skagit River flooding problem. Now we have further similar statements made by the minister with respect to the threat to the west coast by tankers. Apparently the minister is of the opinion that this probably will not take place, but there is nothing in the statement to indicate that Mr. Train agreed with this.

When the minister talks about using the Mackenzie as our trump card, it must indicate, if that is government policy, that a decision has in fact been made by this country that we are going to have a transportation corridor down the Mackenzie. I remind all hon. members that this is not really consistent with the position taken by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Macdonald), that there is in fact no decision and that Canada awaits an application to the National Energy Board. Hon. members will recall that a motion was moved by this party to have this matter referred to a parliamentary committee of all parties in order that a cohesive policy could be worked out and presented to parliament rather than to leave us dependent on what are perhaps only the pious hopes of the minister whose aim is to placate those people on the west coast who are concerned about the potential pollution problems along that coast.

The minister referred to the Skagit Valley. Some months ago this was considered by the government to be a dead issue but it keeps recurring. It is quite clear from the minister's statement that the American position is that British Columbia and the city of Seattle have a binding agreement, but there is no suggestion that the Americans have agreed in principle with our position that the valley should not be flooded. In consequence, the negotiations that will take place are very much up in the air and we do not know for certain what the outcome will be. When the minister talks about the contract between British Columbia and the city of Seattle and the legitimate claims of compensation by Seattle, it should be remembered that there is some serious question about whether that contract, whether the agreement and whether the IJC order are in fact legal and binding. I would hope that this government is not, by the use of loose wording and sloppy comments, putting the country or the province of British Columbia into the position where it will be impossible, when dealing with the Americans on the subject, to raise as a defence to their exaggerated compensation claims the legal defence that in fact the IJC order is not valid and, as a consequence, the agreement subsequently signed is not valid either.

The minister also referred to the Great Lakes Water Quality Treaty and indicated that Mr. Train said there

[Mr. Fraser.]

might be some slippage with respect to the United States meeting the deadlines regarding the regulations that they must meet, as mentioned yesterday, by April 15. I hope that there will be some assurance from the government today that the Canadian position is that the regulations which were in fact supposed to have been ready are ready and that there is no delay so far as Canadian participation in the preparation of these regulations is concerned.

Lastly, I want again to emphasize the importance that my party puts on ongoing discussions. I thank the minister for his statement but I end with the warning that statements made in the House of Commons ought to be consistent with statements made outside the House of Commons. It ill behoves the government or any member of it to make statements that tend to lull the citizens into an acceptance of a position in which they do not have to continue to maintain vigilance in areas as important as the pollution threat to our west coast.

**Mr. Randolph Harding (Kootenay West):** Mr. Speaker, the members of the New Democratic Party in the House welcome the interesting statement made by the Minister of the Environment regarding his meeting with Hon. R. B. Train, Chairman of the United States President's Council on Environmental Quality. I should like to tell the minister that such meetings in our opinion are very essential if we are to obtain a united approach to our joint international environmental problems. Some of the comments made by the minister were extremely interesting. He covered ten specific points. There is not enough time to go over them in any detail, but I must say he has given us just enough information to make hon. members start asking questions about the depth of the talks he had with Mr. Train.

To begin with, he mentioned the discussion and the turning over of information to Mr. Train in connection with the Mackenzie River Valley. I suggest that the minister ought to level with the House and turn over the same type of information to hon. members.

We have not received in detail the context of the studies that have been done on the Mackenzie, and we should like to know whether the minister indicated clearly to Mr. Train that this could be the alternative to a tanker route down the west coast of British Columbia. It is time that members of the opposition were taken into the minister's confidence. It is time that we had a full and open discussion on where Canada is going with respect to this problem.

I might mention another interesting point. I noted that there was talk about an exchange of information regarding the east and west coasts of Canada, what they are going to do to control oil spills and so on. This is good. I suggest to the minister there is one very important factor that must be taken into consideration if we are to prevent oil spills, and that is the setting up of some type of traffic control system on both the east and west coasts. It must be a very efficient control system that will go a long way toward eliminating the numbers of shipwrecks that take place resulting in disastrous oil spills which affect the ecology and marine life of both the east and west coasts of Canada.