

Dumping at Sea

I have talked about some of the limitations of this bill and the concerns I have for it. I commend the authorities who drew up the bill and who are pushing the minister. I have talked to some of the officials in the minister's department. I am impressed with their keenness and desire to do what is right for the environment of Canada. However, the minister is kind of pulling back and saying, whoa, not so fast. She is trying to push the Prime Minister and the cabinet. I suggest the Minister of the Environment should take a leaf out of the book of President Nixon and start kicking a bit instead of pulling and pushing. I support this bill in principle.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wenman: I will even put my cynicism aside for a minute and give the minister the benefit of the doubt. I shall assume, at least during second reading, that the bill is a product of idealism rather than merely a convenient sop to those who are concerned about the pollution of the oceans, even though I know the minister does not possess the authority necessary to back up this legislation.

● (2030)

When the time comes for amendments to be made we intend to make sure that this bill is capable of being enforced, unlike the contaminants legislation which could not be enforced. I have not obtained a legal opinion as to whether the bill before us can be enforced, but I am nevertheless concerned about this aspect. So I commend the minister, and accept the measure as being put forward on an idealistic basis at this point. I look forward to examining the bill, clause by clause, during the committee stage, and I hope that in the end we can produce an act which is evidence of some leadership, hopefully something which will bring us closer to the over all water policy which I demand of the minister for Canadians and for the world.

Mr. Allan B. McKinnon (Victoria): I rise to make a brief intervention in this debate. My interest is mainly in the danger of pollution on the west coast.

First, I would like to make a few comments about the question period this afternoon. I may have missed something in the translation from French into English of a reply by the Minister of the Environment (Mrs. Sauvé). I attempted, unsuccessfully, to get an early copy of the *Hansard* report, but it appeared to me that this afternoon the minister indicated she thought the danger of oil spills from oil tankers in the Strait of Juan de Fuca had been eliminated with the projected movement of the harbour from Cherry Point to Port Angeles, where it is presumed they will have an offshore loading point.

Port Angeles is not outside the Strait of Juan de Fuca but is some 50 miles inside the entrance to the strait. While the danger is not as great if the tankers come only to Port Angeles as it would be if they come as far as Cherry Point, there is still considerable danger—there is a danger of collision in the confines of the Strait of Juan de Fuca. So, while it is an improvement over the Cherry Point location, it is not as good as if the harbour were located at Neah Bay or at Gray's Harbour, which would take it outside the restricted waters of the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

[Mr. Wenman.]

I hope the minister will do what she can to see that the movement of the offshore loading point toward the ocean is accelerated. She will then be able to answer truly in the House of Commons that the danger is, to the best of her ability, now removed.

My second reason for rising in debate this evening is to call attention to the difference between the proclamations of the government concerning anti-pollution measures and what happens in practice. For example, the following appeared in the *Vancouver Sun* on May 4, 1973, quoting a statement made by former environment minister Jack Davis:

"Up to \$20 million a year in federal government loans is available to clean up pollution in the Straits of Georgia and Juan de Fuca and their tributary waters", Environment Minister Jack Davis said today.

It would appear that such a fund would help out the people on the West Coast without any great strain on the administrative facilities. However, an oil spill occurred a short time later, and at that time there was nothing but confusion in the handling of the clean-up operation, the problem appearing to be who should do the cleaning up. Should it be the Ministry of Transport or the Department of the Environment? They just didn't seem to know who should do it. The view of one spokesman for the federal environmental emergency service was reported in the *Vancouver Sun* as follows:

Put in what Chris Hatfield, federal environment emergency coordinator, calls simple terms, it goes like this:

"If a spill originates with a ship within the Vancouver harbor boundaries, the take-charge guys will be the National Harbours Board.

Outside the harbor, the federal ministry of transport.

From the land into the inlet, the federal environmental department.

From land to land, the municipality and the province."

As Mr. Hatfield says, this doesn't mean that the level of authority assigned to any specific area is solely responsible for clean-up.

If an oil spill occurs in the middle of the night, a more confusing policy than that set out by the government would be hard to conceive. A few days after the article appeared, the municipality of Oak Bay had the misfortune to be affected by an oil spill which happened during the hours of darkness.

No one knew what ship the spill came from, and for the benefit of the minister I would like to point out here that when a spill does take place speed is of the essence in dealing with pollution caused by oil washing up on beaches. If you wait for as much as a day the problem is multiplied.

The Oak Bay municipality got right to work and cleaned up the oil spill—a very small one. They then sent their bill to the Department of Transport. It was referred back to them and they were told it was somebody else's responsibility. There the runaround started.

On March 4, 1974, as recorded at page 121 of *Hansard*, I rose in the House and asked the then minister of the environment, he having just completed a long speech on fisheries, if he would mind telling me his policy on the clean-up of oil spills. I asked my question in the following words:

Will the minister assure the House that when oil spills occur from ships and when the federal government, whose responsibility it is, is