

## S. O. 52

environment really is. We can never assume the strength of Mother Nature.

In closing, let me say as associate Liberal environment critic, we have heard all the dramatic and emotional aspects of the oil spill here in this emergency debate. But the question that Governments seemingly never ask: "Why do the efforts to control these disasters always have to be so disorganised and impromptu?"

As a recent editorial in the *Montreal Gazette* stated, there are no "Red Adairs" for oil spills. His sort of specialisation is absent when a tanker leaks. Then, relief operations are almost always "seat-of-the-pant" affairs. Experts often are sent too late—and they are not truly experts. I join with the Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps) as we support the call of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner) that the federal Government launch high-level talks with Washington on better ways to control West Coast supertanker traffic.

This oil spill is a disaster of deadly proportions for the delicate environment of the Pacific coastline. As the assault on the environment continues, it seems that most of us are powerless to do anything, but our Government isn't. Canada should accelerate its fight against U.S. plans to drill for oil in the Arctic Wildlife Refuge near the Yukon border.

Environmental groups say that if drilling were to go ahead there, thousands of caribou that migrate across the border each year would die, and a way of life for native Canadians in the region would be jeopardised.

We must all ask ourselves as Canadians, what price do we pay for economic development, and at what cost to the environment? Human error and incompetence have caused decades of devastation. The Valdez oil spill should never have happened.

Our environment has been neglected, taking a back seat to many other issues. This spill graphically illustrates that a concern for the environment should be first and foremost in our minds. How many more spills like Valdez do we need to make us take constructive and long-term measures rather than defensive, short-term measures?

**Hon. Frank Oberle (Minister of State (Forestry)):** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for permitting me to make a brief contribution to this debate. How easy it is for all of us to be caught up in the emotions that are associated

with an accident of the magnitude that we are discussing tonight.

Perhaps at the end it would matter little whether this accident occurred in the South China Sea, whether it occurred off the coast of Alaska or off the coast of Canada. The emotions we feel here tonight are associated with watching nature as it reacts to the damage that humankind has once more inflicted upon it.

I am very angry and saddened about the fact that people charged with the steering and operation of such large systems can be so careless of the discharge of their responsibility, how people can be so careless and how they warrant being charged with the sensitivities of a system that is bound to fail when humans fail. I am angry about our inability to do something about this disaster now.

The fact is that no matter what we talk about here tonight and whom we attach blame to, when an accident like this happens, when nature decides to take over and you have three-metre waves, there is no effective response. I am saddened we did not respond in the first 24 hours when there was a calm sea, when the oil could have been contained around the immediate area where the accident took place. I am saddened and angry that the people responsible did not have the facility in place. Yes, I feel the kind of anger that comes with having to stand by, as the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Bouchard) has to do and others who were on the site, helplessly watching as dead animals are being washed ashore.

I wonder if anyone has ever seen a bald eagle thrash around in the bush after it has digested the cadaver of a dead animal which is polluted with oil? It makes you very emotional and angry.

There is another thing that makes me angry tonight. I am reminded of the scene of an accident that I came upon, a head-on collision between two cars. There were two people lying there bleeding out of every pore, every bone in their body broken. Nobody knew whether one or both were dead. There were two people standing there fighting about whose fault it was. That is what the Opposition is doing here tonight. They are standing here attaching blame. They are arguing about whose fault it is instead of arguing about what we can learn about this megadisaster, arguing about what we can do to avoid these kinds of things from happening in the future.