

boating activity that is really unique, and I have it will be allowed to continue, always of course in compliance with environmental criteria.

I also think that young people in our ridings are becoming increasingly critical when judging the position we take on the environment, and I am proud to represent a Government that has decided not just to talk but to act. Whatever our opposition friends may say, the environment should not be politicized. The environment should concern every single one of us, and we should make a concerted effort to work together on all sides of the House, with all concerned Canadians. I have, and I imagine all my colleagues have people in their ridings who are environmentalists.

Recently, Mr. Speaker, we had the *Festival des outardes* in Plaisance which is right at the beginning of my riding. Last year, the festival attracted 5,000 visitors, and this year more than 10,000 people came to admire the Canada geese that happened to stop over and add to the beauty of this area.

Mr. Speaker, we are indeed fortunate that we are not near the coast of Alaska. When we saw the birds dying after the *Exxon Valdez* spill, we felt that we were lucky we had these marvelous birds coming as a sign of spring.

Mr. Speaker, you are signalling that my time has expired. Once again, I would like to urge Hon. Members on all sides of the House to consider environmental issues as part of a common problem and to avoid using them for political ends.

• (1730)

[English]

Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Nunatsiq): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak in the debate today. I would like to take this opportunity to speak on some environmental issues that are of concern to northerners all across the circumpolar north.

In recent months much attention has been focused on toxic chemicals in the Canadian Arctic. Many Canadians were shocked to learn that an area of the country they think of as unspoiled is subject to toxic contamination. Northern aboriginal people were alarmed by the headlines in the southern city newspapers predicting the demise of the polar bear and an end to their traditional consumption of wild meat.

Supply

For a number of years individual scientists have been working on several studies of contaminants in the Arctic. Prior to 1985 these scientists were largely working on their own, but as it became evident there was an emerging problem in the North a more co-ordinated approach was developed.

Concern about the possibility of contamination of food species from PCBs left at abandoned DEW Line sites led to visits to northern communities and pilot studies. The people of Broughton Island in my constituency were the subject of scientific studies in 1987 and 1988. Those studies found PCBs in the people and in the wild food that they consume.

This past February a team of scientists met in Ottawa to discuss these and other findings of Arctic contaminant research. Although these studies concern Inuit directly, a request by Inuit organizations to send an Inuit representative to this meeting was turned down by the Government.

Shortly after that meeting some scientific researchers flew to Broughton Island to brief the community on their findings. They told the residents that there was no immediate danger to their health and that they could continue to eat the wild food as they have always done. The community, however, still has many concerns. They want more information than they have received to date.

Following their trip to Broughton Island, the scientists travelled to Yellowknife where they made a presentation to the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories. They brought the message that although chemicals have been found in the wildlife the food is safe to eat. They took great pains to stress that the nutritional benefits of the wild food outweigh any risks associated with chemical contamination. They said that substitution of Inuit foods with marketed foods would result in a poorer diet with a real risk of damage to health. It would also be detrimental to Inuit culture.

This affirmation of the continued cultural importance and nutritional value of wild food, which we call country food, was most reassuring. However, it is not sufficient to allay all the concerns that have arisen on this issue.

In addition to PCBs, DDT, chlordane and toxaphene have been found in northern wildlife, in foods which are part of the average daily food intake of northern aboriginal people—in seal, whale and in polar bear. Cadmium, mercury, lead and dioxin have been found.