

Amax Limited

mine at double the previous capacity and to deposit tailings effluent in Alice Arm at the rate of 12,000 tonnes a day. Notices to this effect were formally published in the *B.C. Gazette* and the Prince Rupert newspapers. This notice was published twice and a copy was provided to the local community of Kitimat-Stikine. No objection to the application was received. All of this was done strictly by the book, by very regular procedure.

As this House may be aware, there is good communication between the Province of British Columbia and Environment Canada in the environmental review process. There is a referral arrangement between the Pollution Control Branch and the regional office of Environment Canada's Environmental Protection Service. Thus, a copy of the Amax permit application was referred at an early stage to the federal Government.

Why was Amax not allowed to continue dumping raw tailings into Lime Creek? The reason, basically, was that Metal Mining Liquid Effluent Regulations under the Fisheries Act were passed in February, 1977. The Regulations, which are applied throughout the country, prescribed limits for total suspended matter and were intended to prohibit the disposal of tailings into lakes and rivers.

It was recognized in drafting those regulations that the marine disposal of tailings may be the best environmental option in certain situations and would be considered on a case by case basis. The Environmental Code of Practice, which was published by the Government at the same time, states on page 23, and I quote directly from the Code:

6.2 (2) When it can be shown that the unconfined disposal alternative is the most practical method, and that it is environmentally preferable to confined disposal a separate regulation for each specific site must be obtained to allow its use.

So it was clearly spelled out in 1977 that the Government would consider site specific regulations in cases where it was appropriate.

Was it appropriate in this case? The clear answer is yes, it was, but it was not on the basis of sinister political pressure or on the basis of some special favour to Amax, as the Hon. Member for Skeena would have us believe. No, it was an appropriate measure for sound environmental protection reasons, based on hard facts and scientific judgment.

I will return to this in a moment but the House should know that the marine disposal of tailings has been a common practice on the coast of British Columbia. While it may not be the ideal way to dispose of tailings from a fish habitat viewpoint, in the past this was considered the only practical method of tailings disposal in any mining operation in rugged terrain on the coast of B.C.

Anaconda at Britannia Beach, only 20 miles north of Vancouver, dumped its tailings into Howe Sound for more than 50 years, until 1974. Texada Mines dumped its tailings into the Strait of Georgia for almost 25 years, until 1976. Utah Mines on Vancouver Island and Wesfrob Mines on the Queen Charlotte Islands, also in the riding of the Hon. Member for

Skeena, are currently, this day, dumping tailings into the ocean. It is not all that unusual.

I do not mean to suggest that because marine disposal of tailings has been practised in the past it is necessarily acceptable. It is not ideal, and Environment Canada has disallowed it on many occasions. The point I would like to make is that the Government's environmental experts considered it and came to the conclusion that it was not the preferable way to handle things.

In the case of Amax it was the preferable way. It may not have been in other circumstances. I can give examples: at Nanisivik Mines on Baffin Island and at Cominco's Polaris Mine on Little Cornwallis Island, both in the high Arctic, the Government rejected that method. In the case of Amax at Alice Arm, we said yes. We do not automatically give a rubber stamp in every case.

Mr. Fulton: You do. You are a rubber stamp.

Mr. Tobin: Let me move on to another point that probably led the Hon. Member to take up this issue. It is well known that at the time of the Amax decision there was disagreement among Government scientists about whether to permit the marine disposal of tailings in Alice Arm. Biologists concerned with the preservation of fish habitat do not view in the same way the fact that these tailings will bury the bottom of part of Alice Arm.

What is offensive to me is the suggestion that this difference among Government scientists was settled by pressure of any kind from any quarter. Senior officials in Environment Canada and in Fisheries and Oceans weighed the risks and made a decision to recommend marine disposal. That was the result of a proper administrative review and it was vindicated by a review by three highly esteemed experts in this field from the University of British Columbia and from the University of Victoria. Would the Members opposite question their judgment?

Mr. Fulton: We have.

Mr. Tobin: I ask the Hon. Member for Skeena, is it his opinion that these experts are somehow part of a conspiracy? The Hon. Member practises what is almost a Joseph McCarthy mentality in reverse. In his mind, everybody is at the end of a string. Frankly, I find it disappointing.

There was a time in this House, and in this country, when this Party opposite, although its political philosophy is slightly left of mine, earned a great deal of respect for standing up on issues, and standing up with integrity.

Mr. Fulton: We will not be lectured by Liberals about integrity, thank you very much.

Mr. Tobin: Many men who filled those chairs opposite stood up on issues with great integrity. It is now sad, and it is disappointing.

Mr. Fulton: You guys are pathetic.

Mr. Tobin: Perhaps if the Members who sat on the benches opposite years ago were here today, they would be somewhat