

Request for Environmental Council

It seems to me that this is a matter which should receive consideration in the future because there is no comparison between the possibility of damage due to spillage of oil from a newly constructed ship and the probability of spillage from some old wreck that somebody hires for a small amount of money in order to transport oil.

We have a regulation applying a 15 cents per ton levy on ships of over 1,000 tons. Here I am dealing with the short-term question which is an issue in New Brunswick and may become an issue in Nova Scotia before long. A large development is planned in the southern part of New Brunswick on the Bay of Fundy. Incidentally, it is my riding although it is seven or eight miles from Saint John. It is at Lorneville. As everybody knows, Mr. Speaker, the continuation of that development is very much in jeopardy.

The oil people who contemplate development have said they cannot afford the 15 cents per ton levy. They say they may have to pay this levy inward and outward and if they transport products between one place and another in the area. In other words, there is a possibility they may have to pay the levy three times and they say they cannot afford it. One may ask, what can they afford? But before dealing with that question I would like to mention the seriousness of the situation. It was only about a month ago that we journeyed to Saint John to attend one of those fund raising dinners that everybody knows about. There we saw the plans of this development.

At one end of the development was a huge thermal plant for the production of electricity, involving enormous expenditure and based to an extent on the possibility that they might get their fuel at an attractive price from the over-all development. Next was a huge wharf to be built by the Continental Oil Company, costing approximately \$60 million. The Canadian National and CPR had their tracks laid out, and a good deal of space was left for further development to take place. In other words, the very thing that is provided for in various legislative enactments of this parliament is being put into operation at Lorneville at the present time. But now it is all in jeopardy and the whole project may be scrapped because the shippers say they cannot afford this levy.

• (2020)

I am sure that no one within sound of my voice could contemplate such a situation without regretting that it is possible. We must do everything we can to avoid it. The general manager of the project revealed that Continental Oil Company was prepared to pay a levy of five cents to seven cents a ton, but with the present levy the company would lose \$200 million a year. I submit that there is evidence of lack of investigation when the Minister of Transport (Mr. Jamieson) tells us he is satisfied the government will get \$25 million in the bank as a result of this levy, while the company concerned says it will lose \$200 million a year on the basis of a 15-cent levy. Unless there is something wrong here, it seems to me there is plenty of latitude for the company, the federal authority and the provincial government to put their heads together and work out an agreement with which they are prepared to live.

[Mr. Flemming.]

It seems that the maximum levy was imposed and the submission is that there is no need for the maximum. There is quite a bit of criticism of the federal government. The president of Gulf Oil of Canada—I point out that the company is in Nova Scotia in case someone might think I am being partisan—Mr. “Jerry” McFee, said last week that a 15-cent per ton levy is twice as high as required and he criticized the government for failing to indicate a ceiling for the fund.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but his time has expired.

[Translation]

Is the hon. member rising on a point of order?

[English]

Mr. Corbin: I understand that there is a limitation on the time but would you allow me, Mr. Speaker, to put a question to the hon. member?

Some hon. Members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): This can be done only by unanimous consent, and it is my understanding that no extension of time has been given by the House. I understand procedure we have adopted has even been made an order of the House.

Mrs. Grace MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, I assure the hon. member who has just spoken that we will be very pleased to add the word “improve” to our motion, but the main thing about which we are concerned is to make sure that the first steps are taken toward protecting and preserving the environment. There has been a great deal of talk throughout the country and a great deal of interest has been shown in the matter, but there must be a great deal more vigorous and immediate leadership from the federal government before we get anything like the amount of action that is required to preserve and protect the environment.

Our discussion on the motion has been very wide-ranging, from local pollution issues to the Stockholm conference on the environment. This reflects the fact that this is a many faceted problem and it concerns the public in many ways. However, there has been the feeling among some members that we can get along in a leisurely fashion with respect to the question of the environment. Those of us who have been digging into this subject realize that the experts are deeply concerned lest our technology whittle away, destroy and obliterate our environment to such an extent and so rapidly that in the process the human animal will be eliminated.

We are beginning to realize that we must face up to two problems, the problem of world population and the problem of world environment, and that those things must be dealt with not in some dim and distant future but right now, if we are to keep out of trouble. Canada is one of the world's few remaining treasure houses of natural resources and we are beginning to discover that other countries are realizing this fact. They have used up their own treasures, their own natural resources, to quite an extent.