

I join the minister in congratulating the task force "Operation Oil" which had the job of cleaning up the mess at Chedabucto Bay earlier this year. I was one of several hon. members who had the privilege of visiting this area. We saw the exact location of the disaster and the terrible results along the coastline, around the ship and for many miles in all directions. It was obvious that immediate measures were required to eliminate further spills. Even more important, and I place this first although the minister may have placed it second, when spills occur a group should be ready to deal with them.

The minister has expressed the extent of the bill. As far as marine regulations are concerned, there has been an effort to strengthen these in order to prevent spills. The minister referred to establishing groups throughout the country which might deal effectively with spills that occur. My main criticism of the bill is that it is not specific in setting up crews which could act immediately on situations such as occurred at Chedabucto Bay. I will deal with that later. Although this bill may not have intended to deal with that, I think it should. One of our most urgent concerns should be that we are prepared for disasters of this kind.

In a recent report prepared for the Progressive Conservative Party, of which I was a co-author, certain recommendations were made along these lines in very brief terms. I wish to quote paragraph 4 of this report:

Contingency plans for oil or other spills from ships in Canadian waters need to be set down more specifically. We will set up, train and equip mobile crews to deal immediately with the actual or imminent spill of hazardous substances into water, drawing from the experience gained at Chedabucto Bay and elsewhere. To eliminate delays and arguments in emergency situations, we will embark on legislative procedures to give a Canadian government agency authority to immediately take control of any vessel carrying a hazardous substance which is in imminent danger of losing its contents into the water.

That is a brief, general description of our objective. The greatest concern I have at the moment is the ability of the government to enforce the provisions outlined by the minister. As he stated, they are not based on any international agreement or understanding. I agree that we cannot wait for years for such an agreement to be established.

There are other problems. We do not have a coastguard service sufficient to aid an inspector who may seek to board a foreign vessel for the purpose of inspection. The subject of a coastguard has been raised in this House quite often. We are now beginning to see the need. It would be a brave man indeed who would attempt to board certain foreign vessels and demand to inspect their facilities without sufficient backing. He requires the full force of the Canadian Parliament and a naval force to back him up when making such an inspection. Otherwise, the whole bill will be useless.

With regard to jurisdiction, we are concerned about the fact that fishing zones prescribed under the Territorial Sea and Fishing Zones Act have not yet been defined. It is going to be very difficult to enforce this bill under present conditions. The definition of the application of this bill is in sub-section (2)(c). It applies:

Canada Shipping Act

to any fishing zones of Canada prescribed pursuant to the Territorial Sea and Fishing Zones Act:—

I hope the government will act quickly to establish these zones so that the bill now under consideration will be effective. If they are not, jurisdiction is gone and so are the prescribed areas. In certain parts of eastern Canada, these zones have not yet been prescribed.

• (12:40 p.m.)

I have not been able to discover in the bill any provision for the setting up and training of mobile crews to deal with emergency situations. The minister has said this is a desirable objective and that a beginning has been made in several locations. I had hoped to see the relevant provision written into the bill itself, bearing in mind the message we got from the special task force, "Operation Oil", on page 41 of its report:

We carry no brief for the ratio of successes and failures in our own operations but we do hope that if there is another major spill in Canadian waters those responsible for the clean-up will be able to do a better job because of our experience and our recommendations.

We are of the firm opinion that the only way that oil spills are going to be cleaned up effectively, when the responsibility rests at the federal level, is to have a small task force such as ours given the full responsibility and the authority to deal with it. This task force must, as it was in our case, be responsible to a single minister.

Further on, at page 42, the recommendation reads as follows:

On the basis of these experiences we recommend that the Minister of Transport have the responsibility for dealing with pollution arising from oil spilled in water when the extent and nature of the spill makes it a federal responsibility.

We recommend that this responsibility of the Minister of Transport be focussed in a small team at the headquarters level and comprise a minimum of one physical scientist, one biological scientist and one operations expert, the physical scientist being the leader.

This is somewhat similar to the operation which was set up at Chedabucto Bay. The minister did refer during the course of his remarks to such a force or forces but the bill itself gives no authority for setting them up in specific terms. I hope he is proceeding promptly to get these forces into operation.

With regard to taking charge of vessels in danger of allowing pollutants to enter the water, an existing section of the Canada Shipping Act, section 495(c), has been quoted. I am pleased to see that the section has been redrafted in clause 738 of the new bill. Correction, Mr. Speaker. On first reading, at least, the new clause does not seem to be much different from the old one certainly not so different as to give us cause for confidence that enforcement will be carried out more effectively. As I say, the provision exists already in the Canada Shipping Act. Yet we have found twice in the past year that ships in distress, foundering, with their cargoes likely to spill, have become involved in arguments between owners, charterers, masters and insurers as to just who would take charge and where responsibility lay. Delays in this connection could have serious consequences. Immediate action must be taken when spillage begins and sufficient