

First, he is ignoring the valuable input of those volunteers who did a great deal of work for which they should be congratulated. They were the first on the scene and were able to alleviate some of the problems which may have resulted had they not become involved in the clean-up right away when it was first coming on to the beaches.

The second advantage of a public inquiry is that we can hear from people who are experts in the development of oil spill response equipment. In my constituency offices on the West Coast, I have received a number of suggestions from inventors and entrepreneurs who have developed oil spill response equipment. Had the Government paid attention to these people prior to the last oil spill, they may have had the resources and the wherewithal to deal effectively and to prevent damage of the magnitude that eventually occurred because of the inadequate response of the various federal agencies that took place on the West Coast.

There has been an excellent proposal from a gentleman in my constituency by the name of Mr. Bedford who has developed a method of locating chip barges and hog fuel barges along the West coast of Vancouver Island. Those resources are there already. Chips and hog fuel can absorb a great deal of the lighter elements in the oil so that it can be captured, collected and burned before it creates a problem on our beaches. Yet Mr. Bedford does not get a hearing from the provincial Government or from the federal Government. In the absence of a full public inquiry, Mr. Bedford does not have an opportunity to present his proposal to the people who are concerned about oil spills, to the people in the Ministry of Transport or in this Board who might take a look at the proposal and discover it would be valuable to locate on the West Coast to prevent any further damage of the magnitude that took place as a result of the last oil spill.

Another gentleman who my colleague from North Island—Powell River mentioned in the emergency debate is a Mr. Wiley. He has developed a method for cleaning up oil spills in tidal waters offshore of the west coast of Vancouver Island. Again Mr. Wiley has not had an opportunity to present his proposals for oil spill clean-ups to a public body so that he can be cross-examined and suggestions can be made, suggestions for improvements to these techniques, and ultimately suggestions for the deployment of this equipment in various centres up and down the west coast of Vancouver Island so that these pieces of equipment will be there in the

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very likely event that another spill will take place, because as the experts have pointed out to us, it is only a matter of chance. As was mentioned by another of my colleagues, as we allow these tankers with vast quantities of oil to run up and down the coast from Valdez, Alaska into Cherry Point within a very few miles of the West Coast of Canada, which is a very delicate and sensitive coastal environment, there is bound to be another disaster, and in fact another disaster of major proportions, similar to what we are seeing in Valdez, Alaska within the last week or so.

We do not need simply to place the blame. Surely fault has to be placed because the response time of federal government agencies to the oil spill was inadequate and the quality of response was inadequate as well. We want to see where we went wrong and what we can do in the future to ensure that we do not go wrong the next time, and we know that the next spill is going to bring us much more serious damage, much more serious problems than the last oil spill brought to the west coast of Vancouver Island.

There are many advantages of a public inquiry that will bring benefits to all of the people living on the West Coast. It will make us better able to deal with oil spills or marine incidents the next time. I think that such a provision in this legislation is absolutely necessary. The chairman should be as independent as possible so that when the Minister is fearful of calling for a public inquiry because he does not want blame to descend on his Ministry, he will be sufficiently independent that he can call a public inquiry and the full facts of the marine incident which resulted in the oil spillage will be brought to the attention of the public. Also the full details of how to respond to a spill and how to correct a previous response will be brought forward so that we will be better able to deal with an oil spill next time.

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I share the concerns that have been expressed previously by my colleagues. I strongly support the idea of a public inquiry process being inserted in the legislation. If the legislation is passed quickly, I hope we can overcome the unnecessary delay that has been developed by the Minister of the Environment over this oil spill issue. The delay has been damaging in itself. We should be getting to these issues right away, while they are still fresh in people's mind, while they are still able to make a contribution to a public inquiry.