

*The Budget—Mr. D. W. Munro*

My experience in parliament, a matter of not quite two years, has shown me that to deal with a subject once in debate is not really sufficient. However reasonable and sensible one's ideas may be, they have to be repeated time and time again, particularly with this government, before there is the slightest indication they have begun to sink in at all.

I have always thought it unfortunate that parliamentary delegations on assignments abroad are not provided with an automatic opportunity, under the rules of the House, to report on the outcome of their assignments or, better still, to open up debate on the outcome of their visits. I tried to do this on July 25, 1973, the day following a visit to Washington by a small all-party delegation from this House, of which I was a member, to let people in the United States Congress know how deeply concerned we were about the dangers of the proposed west coast tanker route from Valdez, Alaska, south through the Pacific into the Puget Sound, through the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and then via the Rosario Strait to Cherry Point for offloading. My interest was prompted because of the location of my riding, and also because of the notion I put forward at that meeting which, in my view, has not only regional but national impact. Since I still feel that the proposal I made in Washington is worth recording I propose to repeat it now.

First, I think one or two things about the Alaska-Cherry Point tanker route that prompt my worry and concern are worth mentioning, considering the inactivity of the government to do anything about the matter. One is that ships carrying Prudoe Bay crude from Valdez to Cherry Point can travel the entire route over a combination of U.S. waters and the high seas. That is to say that passage through the Strait of Juan de Fuca can be negotiated without entering Canadian waters. Canada's ability to block, or even to regulate or control ships plying these waters is, in other words, nil. Our negotiating position on the question would appear to be negligible. We can exhort, plead or urge, but we seem to be in no position to bargain. As I shall indicate later, we have a bargaining position and have failed to use it.

The second thing about the route we are looking at is that the Strait of Juan de Fuca, though reasonably wide, is subject to high winds, strong tides, and fogs at all seasons. The daily weather reports that I hear when I am home indicate a small craft warning nearly every day. That means that winds are blowing up to 30 miles per hour, with riptides. This strait, and the Rosario Strait, through which the tankers also have to pass, are treacherous, subject to strong winds, strong tides, and the currents seem to run, in the main, from south to north, for example, toward the Canadian shore.

Another thing about this route relates to fisheries because, through these narrow binational waters without regard to boundaries, passes one of the last surviving large salmon migrations, out to sea as fingerlings or grilse, and later at spawning, as full grown fish, heading inland to lay their eggs, perpetuate their kind, and die.

A large oil spill in these waters would endanger this migration, threaten the livelihood of many commercial fishermen, both Canadian and from the United States, and cast a lasting blemish on a marine playground enjoyed by

[Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich).]

thousands, nay, perhaps millions. Is it any wonder then that I feel obliged to raise my voice in defence of these waters?

When we went to Washington on that visit in July, 1973, I put before the assembled group a proposal that the United States authorities concerned should consider an oil route that would eliminate the need to use that inland sea altogether. The tankers, I suggested, should proceed further down the coast to the nearest feasible offloading site. I mentioned Gray's Harbour, just 100 miles or so down the Washington coast, where deep sea facilities are already available—in depths which, admittedly, would not accommodate the deepest of deep draft tankers, but in waters that are dredgable. And if dredging produced insuperable engineering problems then possibly offloading could be assured, with less danger, in a basin. This motion was well received. I have since given it wide circulation among interested congressmen, state officials and oilmen, and I have publicized it in Canada.

The then secretary of state for external affairs said it was not really his business to propose alternative offloading sites. What is to be lost by so doing, I ask?

The great shortcoming of this proposal—and I recognized it as well as anyone—was that Canada did not appear to have any leverage or persuasive argument to make the United States listen. We did not seem to have a negotiating position. As soon as we start to talk about keeping the tankers out of the inland sea, we get back the arguments of (a) what about the tankers taking oil out of Vancouver harbour through these waters—this was done, regrettably, at the height of the Middle East oil panic last spring—or (b) what about the tankers in United States waters on the east coast, offloading Venezuelan and/or Middle East oil for eastern Canada through Portland, Maine? These are tough arguments to counter. The first of these counter-arguments has disappeared, I hope forever. What about the other one?

Can we not negotiate? Can we not trade off safety in east coast United States waters in return for real safety in west coast binational waters? Why not, I suggest now, off-load east coast oil at present terminals in Nova Scotia, say, and use a pipeline to carry the crude, or refined product, to consumers in Quebec? Is it the cost of a pipeline that is stopping us?

We talk, with some abandon, of a pipeline or a railway across the Canadian Arctic to the United States border. Why not the much shorter pipeline on the east coast from Port Hawkesbury, say, to Quebec City? The approaches to Port Hawkesbury are not nearly so devious as the approaches to Portland, in Maine, are said to be, Mr. Speaker.

• (1740)

If we were to give serious consideration to this notion, we should have a negotiating position—we keep their backyard tidy, and they undertake not to throw their dirty oil barrels in our backyard, or in my front yard. I suggest, therefore, that we do have a negotiating point. I put it forward merely as one possible way out—we avoid Portland, Maine; they avoid the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Thus we save our west coast fisheries from the threat of an oil spill; and we save the shipping channels in and around Portland, Maine, from the risk of frightful pollution.