

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

there have been replies. I wish to bring this matter to the attention of the minister and ask certain questions, not so much in the hope of a full reply this evening but in order to bring forward the seriousness of this matter affecting the joint development that New Brunswick is involved in at the moment.

My first question is this: Is the minister aware that this levy and the extent of it may kill the entire Conoco project for the Saint John area? Another question is: Is the minister aware that because of the way this matter is now developing—perhaps this was not foreseen when the legislation was passed—we are being unfair to legitimate producers and refiners and that the result may be a boom for tramp steamers like the *Arrow* which pass through that area?

My next question is: Is the minister aware that in this case the province of New Brunswick received no federal incentives grant? The province was legitimately and honestly on its own in this project. Another question is: How can we possibly be expected to compete with Portland, Maine, which imposes a levy of only one half cent, especially when we consider that through that port many products such as oil enter the Montreal market?

Those are the questions I wish to ask. The minister may reply that he personally is giving serious consideration to this matter at the moment. I hope that this will not be another routine type of bureaucratic matter that has come sliding over his desk. I hope he has not gone along with civil servants who may suggest that some people are over-reacting to pollution without considering some of the development that we need in my province—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Bell: I hope, Mr. Speaker, to receive some kind of answer from the minister that will give us hope for this development.

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member asked four key questions. Obviously, I cannot answer them in detail in three minutes. I will, however, assure the hon. member and the House at the outset that I am personally considering the matter. I have had several conversations with Premier Hatfield and have indicated my willingness to meet with him and, indeed, with officials of the oil company concerned or any others, for that matter, at any time he designates.

As to whether this will kill the project, that of course is something on which I cannot pass judgment. However, I would like to say that from our point of view it is a question of the minimum amount we feel is necessary in order to ensure that clean-up operations can be carried out effectively. We have determined a ceiling which I have clearly stated as being \$25 million. That is the minimum amount we feel is necessary. The reason for this is that the *Torre Canyon* cost something like \$16 million to clean up. It was a substantially smaller matter. These are vessels carrying 300,000 tons of oil. The *Arrow* cost some \$4 million. As I said to someone the other day, it was carrying a mere teaspoonful in relation to these huge vessels. We talked about the *Irving Whale* which cost in excess of

[Mr. Bell.]

\$2 million. We are not talking about small change in terms of the Canadian taxpayer.

I do not want to put forward an unnecessary impediment to the development of industry, particularly in the Atlantic provinces. I have said that the ceiling would be \$25 million. We put it at 15 cents a ton in the first instance because we deemed it advisable to get a fair amount in the fund initially. If we had put it at a lower rate it would have gone on for a very much longer period of time. My suspicion is that the shipping and oil companies would not have been much more satisfied had the amount been lower.

I said that if the fund builds up very rapidly, more rapidly than we anticipate—I emphasize that this is a preventive measure—we do not want to spend out of the fund and we will review it over a period, let us say annually. If we are getting an amount in there and we have not had any spills, we will consider reducing the levy. I have given that undertaking. Furthermore, since it will be more than the undertaking of the minister I have said we will try to incorporate such undertakings in the regulations.

As for it being unfair to legitimate operators, I think that the world or virtually all of it has now come to the conclusion that it is not a matter of legitimacy or otherwise: it is simply a question of these being huge hazards even for the best operators. We need to have some way to look after them. I was not asked for federal incentives. As for the state of Maine, they of course cannot carry vessels of this size.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

[Translation]

UNEMPLOYMENT—MONTREAL—DELAY IN PAYMENT OF BENEFITS—REQUEST FOR INQUIRY

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, I have already directed a question to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Perrault) with regard to the delay in the unemployment insurance benefit cheques since the introduction of the new unemployment insurance plan which, as everyone knows, has replaced the former act.

Let us explain the problem briefly: Let us say that a worker became unemployed on October 16. By February 1 or 15, he has not yet received any unemployment insurance cheque. Yet, he has repeatedly contacted his regional office—and, in Lotbinière, it is Sherbrooke, Trois-Rivières or Quebec City—and each time the devoted official could only answer: Sir, an order for your cheque has been given to the Montreal office.

Now, the Montreal office, as we know, is the central office for issuing cheques throughout the province and those cheques do not reach those who are entitled to them.

To show the tragedy in this situation, I shall point out that some of these men have seven or eight children. Being without work, they have no income.

On January 26, the Minister of Labour (Mr. Mackasey), sent a letter, I believe, to all hon. members, promising that in all cases of simple delay a payment would be made within 48 hours and that a review would take place within