

Also, there will be eventually an economic damage assessment and we will follow through with the proceedings we have already started with the U.S. State Department in this respect. We are going to learn a lesson from this mishap. We are well aware that what we did in Vancouver was not perfect. We know we can do better. It is very important to recognize this, Mr. Speaker. The Government has no intention of playing this old political game by claiming it has done everything right while the opposition maintains it has done everything wrong. It is necessary to recognize that it is always possible to do better. Human behaviour can always be improved. We are going to learn a lesson from what happened in January as well as from the unfortunate and painful experience our American neighbours are making in Alaska. It would be awful if we could not learn anything from such tragic events. Mr. Speaker, I can assure the Canadian people that we are going to assess what happened both on Vancouver Island and in Alaska and that we will draw some important conclusions. What will we do with them? We devised some ten years ago a series of rules which govern shipping on our Canadian coasts as well as in the major international waterways.

[English]

Those rules have been set for the St. Lawrence Seaway as well as for the oil traffic offshore B.C. from Alaska to Cherry Point at the beginning of the American territory. Those rules are very rigorous. They have been made, as far as the West is concerned, through an exchange of diplomatic notes in 1979. They are very comprehensive and very tough.

We must admit that up until now they have been efficient. It is a very complex network of bilateral communications, checkpoints and rail use facilities. Nevertheless, we know that this is an occasion for us to assess those rules, to examine them and to see if it would not be possible to improve them and strengthen them. This will be done. It has begun in our different Departments.

If we find out that we can improve them, of course we will improve them. Of course we will say to the Americans that we need to improve those rules. We will come back to the table. We will look at them and we will tighten them because that is in the interests of Americans and Canadians—of people all over the world. Of course this will be done, Mr. Speaker, if it needs to be

done. It is the same thing for the response. There is prevention, which is the best thing to do, and there is response. We know that the response must be swift. It must be tough, diligent and rigorous. If we do not act immediately we can lose control of the spill, and then it will be very difficult.

• (2200)

It is the case in Alaska. We know, all of us, that within five hours of the accident, it has not been possible, because of the magnitude of the spill, to control and to contain the spill, and now the spill is going away in the western direction in the ocean. Eventually we might think—well, this is the opinion of our scientists—that it will break down and dissolve in the water, in the ocean, and we do not know with what bad consequences, but it is easy to imagine that there will be consequences, but we know that the first thing to do if there is an accident is to react swiftly within the first hours.

So we will examine the plans which have already been set up for such circumstances, and if we find out that we must upgrade the equipment, that we must improve the swiftness of the reaction, we will do it and we will report to the public. We have nothing to hide, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bouchard (Lac-Saint-Jean): The environment is a priority. While our friends are always contending that we do not treat the environment as a true priority, I challenge everybody to read the past Speeches from the Throne of this country and to see, in any Speech from the Throne delivered before yesterday in the history of Canada, if one Government has put such an emphasis, such a pre-eminence on environment. It is the first time that such emphasis has been placed on environment, and if you look at what is there, it is a plan of action.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bouchard (Lac-Saint-Jean): Mr. Speaker, it is not a miracle. It is not a piece of cake. It is a document which honestly tried to frame what should be done during the next four years by this Government to cope with environmental problems and environmental concerns of Canadians, and I can tell the Speaker and Canadians that this plan will be realized.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Copps: What plan?