

Supply

those who operate the translation and public address system.

There is a small matter I wish to bring to the attention of the Minister of the Environment and Minister of Fisheries. I will not take up the time of the committee by quoting extensively. I have read with considerable interest a news release issued by Environment Canada. There are two, actually, one dated January 3, 1973, the other, Thursday, February 8. The first, to do with "National air quality objectives announced," reads in part:

National air quality objectives for four major air pollutants: sulphur dioxide, particulate matter, carbon monoxide and total oxidants have been announced by the Honourable Jack Davis, federal Minister of the Environment.

The communiqué goes on to say that this is a significant step in the taking of the inventory of air pollutants in this country. The news release of Thursday, February 8, says that a nationwide inventory of five major air pollutant emissions has been completed by Environment Canada. After repeating the substances contained in the inventory, it says in the fourth paragraph:

Commenting on significant findings, Mr. Davis noted that transportation accounted for 57 per cent of total air pollution emissions of 31.2 million tons. The federal government is actively engaged in the control of motor vehicle emissions.

We are told, particularly in the document I just referred to as well as in the other one to which I referred earlier, that one of the major aspects of motor vehicle exhaust emission is that of carbon monoxide. Carbon monoxide, we are told, is the by-product of the incomplete burning of carbon containing fuels and some industrial processes. The following words are significant:

It decreases the oxygen-carrying capacity of the blood and at levels often found in city air, may impair mental processes.

That last sentence has much to do with the point I wish to make. As it is significant I shall repeat it:

It decreases the oxygen-carrying capacity of the blood and at levels often found in city air, may impair mental processes.

I have done some research into this matter. Recently I talked to the driver of one of our parliamentary buses. He told me these buses are to be replaced by new buses at the end of this month. I asked, "What kind of buses will these be replaced by?" He said, "New and better buses." I said, "Run by gasoline motors?" He said, "Yes, run by gasoline motors, of course. What else?" I suggest to the Minister of the Environment that if the federal government is concerned about the control of motor vehicle emissions, why could not we of this parliament, in this city, in a small way give an example to other institutions, to other cities and other communities and introduce, not gasoline operated buses but electrical vehicles? They exist. They can be purchased. In our own, small way we should by example show what can be done. This matter may not be of national import. On the other hand, we are Members of Parliament and we ought to lead the way because our mental processes, weak as they may be, may be further impaired if we use gasoline-powered vehicles.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Chairman, I shall try to be brief. Many of the things I wanted to comment on were covered adequately in the excellent speech of the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate this evening. I commend it to the Minister of the Environment and Minister of Fisheries.

[Mr. Harney.]

There are two or three items which I feel should be brought to the minister's attention. Since we have experienced difficulty in making our points in the limited time at our disposal during the question period, and since the minister of late has seemed preoccupied with matters concerning the environment, I believe we should take advantage of the opportunity presented by the supplementary estimates to put before the minister our views and concerns relating to fisheries.

We are witnessing, Mr. Chairman, the systematic destruction of Canada's most ancient industry. I hope the House, and particularly the government, will view what is happening with alarm. The industry is threatened not only by overfishing and the inability of the government to protect our own resource in this regard and take necessary action to prevent undue exploitation by foreign nations, but also by environmental pollution, something that I am sure is close to the minister's heart.

On Tuesday last, in the absence of the minister, I directed to the minister's parliamentary secretary a question concerning a statement issued the previous day, February 12, by the United States government regarding the pollution of plankton, the very essence underlying the life of our marine resources. Evidence had been unearthed by the United States government to indicate that plankton, that minute form of marine life with which begins the entire marine ecological process, was being polluted with minute particles of plastic and oil and that this pollution extended from the eastern seaboard of the New England states all the way down the coast of the continent to the Caribbean.

In the absence of the minister I asked the parliamentary secretary, if this very serious threat of pollution exists in Canada, what investigations have been carried out in this country to determine the effects of oil on plankton and on minute forms of sea life and what the effects of plastic pollution are on these minute forms of life. If this pollution extends all the way to our Atlantic coast we face a problem of monumental proportions. This will make the problems of mercury pollution minute by comparison. If in fact plankton has been polluted by oil and plastic, this can affect the whole ecological process and ultimately destroy all the major marine resources. It will certainly have a devastating effect on groundfish.

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I also raised another question which is directly related. On January 10 I asked the Minister of the Environment what he was doing in connection with the substantial reduction in the total catch for last year. The total catch for last year suffered a reduction of 25 per cent. To my mind, this reduction in our total catch epitomizes the seriousness of the problem. It can be attributed directly to our inability to control this resource, to extend control over our continental shelf and our inability to say to the nations of the world which fish off our coast, "This is essentially our resource. We are prepared to share it with you, but you must recognize our right and, indeed, our obligation and responsibility to manage it."

If we do not do that, Mr. Chairman, the result will be total destruction of the fishing industry and the many thousands of Canadian jobs that are dependent on it. The