

Some 12 or 13 years ago, or maybe even 15 years ago, I had the opportunity while working with the British Columbia Government to be Chairman of the Rent Review Commission. We entered into a comprehensive study of rent control and made very sure that not only did tenant groups have the kind of support of which I am speaking, but even the developers who opposed rent controls. Of course, there are different kinds of inquiries. Some inquiries would not need the full-blown treatment of which I am speaking. In today's paper, we read that the Dubin inquiry has already run up a bill of \$750,000. Not every incident will require that level of investigation, but there are some that will. Where they do require it, the public should have that kind of assistance and support if the inquiry is to be meaningful.

The second point I wish to make relates to the west coast oil spill. We on this side of the House have been pressing since Parliament resumed at the beginning of April for a full public inquiry into the west coast oil spill. Since Parliament convened, there have been two further threats to the environment posed by the spillage of fuel or the threatened spillage of fuel on the west coast. In each case, the Minister has advised the House that the situation is under control, that they are looking into it and no one need worry.

On the last two occasions, however, he has added that he would be prepared to see some form of public input into the review of the standards and controls on tankers passing through Canadian waters on the west coast and he has promised the House that will take place. It seems to me that a Government that can produce a Bill of this kind, providing for public inquiries into marine incidents, something which would clearly include oil spills, ought without any further delay to direct a public inquiry into the west coast oil spills and the tanker and barge traffic up and down the coast. There is no excuse for any further delay.

The Minister met this weekend with representatives of a group of 158 prominent British Columbians who have been calling for a public inquiry. He was quoted in the newspapers as saying that he was prepared to have some public input into the departmental inquiry, but he still failed to make a commitment to the House, to the people of Canada and particularly to the people of the west coast of Vancouver Island that there will be a full, public, open, accessible inquiry located at least in part on Vancouver Island into this massive threat to our environment.

Transportation Accident Investigation Board

Returning to my original point on public inquiries, it seems to me that the whole point of the exercise is that the people who are affected must have the power to influence the outcome of the inquiry. If Canada is a genuine democracy, that means that these kinds of inquiries and investigations cannot be intended to cover up problems or to protect the reputations of major companies or even Government Departments that may have failed. Rather, the intention is to help those who are most interested and affected to contribute in a genuine way to solving the problems that need to be addressed. It is their lives and their environment and they are the ones who should have major control over the direction and nature of the inquiry. It is for that reason that we call on the Government not only to introduce at committee stage clear and specific provisions for genuine public enquiries but, as a measure of good faith, to immediately establish a proper public inquiry into the case of the west coast oil spill.

I have not been paying much attention to the clock, but if I still have a few minutes let me add a comment on another aspect of the Bill. I wish to speak about those provisions in the Bill for the appointment of board members. Being a new Member, I may stray just a tad into a clause-by-clause discussion, but I will try to make my comments as general as possible to avoid what may be a breach of the rules. I am sure either you or my colleagues, Madam Speaker, will correct me if I do not succeed.

I would like to comment on the provisions of the Bill for the appointment of the board, at least in general terms. I think this raises a question which we in this Parliament will have to press the Government hard to address in better terms than it has in the Bill.

• (1540)

Those who have had an opportunity to read Jeffrey Simpson's book on patronage in Canada will appreciate that this country needs substantial changes in how boards are appointed. One probably does not even have to read Jeffrey Simpson's book to appreciate that. The public is looking for quite a different approach to how boards are appointed.

I would certainly concede that a Government is entitled to have those who reflect at least in part its perspectives on boards which are policy oriented. There needs to be some provision for that interest to be taken care of. However, in taking care of that interest, we must guard against a tendency to abuse the privilege. We also must consider the other interests involved, that is, the interests of the public in having an independent, honest, open exercise of public responsibility.