

*S. O. 52*

the Member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca (Mr. Barrett) thought we would have been looking into solutions to this problem and ways to prevent the problem from happening again. I believe that problem solving was the reason the Member for Skeena brought this issue up in the House in the first place.

The first experience we had with an oil spill on the coast was in October last year in the Strait of Juan de Fuca. It created serious damage throughout the Strait and the lower end of George's Strait east of Vancouver Island.

Another spill occurred in December, 1988, which spread up the West Coast of Vancouver Island, affecting the whole West Coast. My family has been four generations on that coast, and values that coast and the environment very much.

We have the further oil spill taking place off the coast of Alaska, which could possibly threaten the coast of British Columbia and the area represented by the Member for Skeena in particular. All of these spills have taken place on the West Coast of Canada. Apparently the Government has not learned how to deal with them, how to prevent them or take significant action to prevent them. Therefore, I think the Opposition has to be concerned.

I would have thought the Government would have brought the issue up in the House, would have developed a program to deal with the issue. Had it done so, it would have received unanimous support from Members of the House to bring the issue forward.

A few months ago my colleague, the Member for Saanich—Gulf Islands (Ms. Hunter), requested an impartial commission of inquiry into the Vancouver Island oil spill. Its purpose is not necessarily to establish blame, although it should do so if it is evident. It would also help Canadians and the people of the West Coast and Members of the House deal with oil spills in a quicker and more effective way than we did with the oil spill on the West Coast.

The Government knew that the spill would happen. It knew that damage would take place. It knows about the currents, winds and wave action on the West Coast as will be explained during the debate. The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. Siddon) knew about the wave and current conditions on the West Coast of Vancouver Island. He knows about the wind conditions.

His staff has testified about those wind, wave and current conditions in other disasters, such as the Ramsey Isle disaster. Fisheries and Oceans officials

testified that they know the currents in that area so well that they could have predicted where a ship would go if lost at sea, as well as where oil would go when it is released at sea and drifts north along the coast of Vancouver Island. That whole disaster would have been predicted and could have been controlled early in the game. We would like to see an inquiry that would tell us why the Minister failed to act and why the three ministries involved failed to act in such a way as to prevent the kind of damage that did take place on Vancouver Island.

• (2330)

I certainly do not fault the Hon. Member for Skeena for bringing up this issue in the House today even though the oil has not touched the coast of Canada. I am amazed at some of the responses he is getting from the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. Siddon) and from the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Bouchard). They are precisely the same responses we got in the initial stages when the oil was initially released off Grays Harbour.

The Washington Department of Environment told the Sause Brothers to take that barge 38 miles out off the coast, and they said the oil would drift out to sea. Anybody who knows the current and wave conditions off the west coast of Washington State knows that the oil will not drift out to sea in that area, it will drift north along the coast of Vancouver Island. Anybody who is familiar with wave, wind and current conditions in that area would have known that for certain, especially this Minister, and especially the Minister of Transport (Mr. Bouchard) who has been involved in previous actions and coroners' inquests looking into precisely that kind of problem when it involved ships adrift at sea.

The Minister said to my colleague from Skeena that the winds are going in the wrong direction and the waves are going in the wrong direction and this oil will never come ashore. That is exactly the assurance we got from the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and from the Minister of the Environment at the time of the Nootka spill, and it was completely and totally wrong. That is why we have been asking, along with my colleague from Saanich, for an inquiry into this situation. We want to find out why our projections were wrong in that case, who was at fault for those projections and who was at fault for telling the tanker it had to be dragged 38 miles out to sea off the Washington coast, knowing that that oil was going to drift ashore to Canada.

We have heard some very defensive speeches. None have been as defensive as that of the Hon. Associate Minister of Indian Affairs, but there have been some