

elaborated at some length and indicated the role of their polar commission and the research that was going on and, more importantly perhaps, the research that was being co-ordinated by their commission.

They then asked us what Canada had of a similar nature. It was slightly embarrassing because we had to think very quickly as to just what we had that was even similar and we could not come up with anything, other than to point out that we have a number of institutes around the country. I think particularly of the Canadian Institute of North America, based at the University of Calgary; and the Boreal Institute at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. There are others where there are serious specialized activities going on regarding research into northern Canada and northern Canadian issues.

Let me begin by talking about Bill C-78, an act to establish a Canadian polar commission, by saying that we support this bill in principle. However, we have many concerns that we would like to see addressed in order to ensure that the commission is an effective and functioning body and not simply window-dressing for the government to give the impression that it is doing something regarding the northern parts of the country and, I might say, northern issues globally.

In principle, we support the bill. At this reading, which is second reading where we discuss the principle of the bill, it is important to say, right off the top, that we support this bill in principle.

The government first announced that a commission would be established in August, 1988 in response to the excellent study by Professor Thomas Simons, from Trent University, entitled: "The Shield of Achilles".

When members of Parliament read the report, an excellent report which pointed out the need for such a commission, we were very motivated and encouraged by the fact that the government indicated it planned to move. That is a long time ago but, finally, it is moving and I guess we should be thankful for that. Nothing much was done.

The Prime Minister, when he visited Leningrad in November of last year, announced the establishment of the Canadian Polar Commission. That was one of the announcements he made in the Soviet Union, based on the rather embarrassing experience that some of us had being there just prior to the Prime Minister's visit. However, the Conservative government once more an-

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nounced that a polar commission would be established and *The Green Plan* was released this spring.

Most of the initiatives pertaining to the Arctic, which were included in *The Green Plan*, unfortunately were just old and rather over-used initiatives. That is why we wish to ensure that there will be some real results from the establishment of this commission.

We believe that Canada should be a leader in the area of circumpolar co-operation in the broad range of areas of scientific, social, historical, environmental, human rights and the rights of indigenous peoples. We feel, as a result, that the establishment of this commission is a step in the right direction. However, as I said earlier, we have many, many concerns.

I think it is fair to say that people around the world expect of us, as a developed country with a fine educational and research basis, that we should lead the way on a number of polar research issues. While we have made incredible gains in certain areas, at certain institutes, and in certain departments, the co-ordination of this has been overlooked and certainly things could be an awful lot better.

The mandate given to the commission, while very broad, should ensure that the function of the commission is to set priorities for the government and to keep the government on track addressing the very real issues facing our north, not just academic dissertations, but something more than a dissertation that will sit on the shelf and see no action.

I must say with some regret that this happened with a study done back in 1987 on Broughton Island which found that there were very high levels of PCBs in the food chain and in the blood samples of the local people. Two-thirds of the children had abnormally high PCB levels, yet no action was taken on the piece of research. We hope with the polar commission in place there will be some incentive not only to study the problems but to take action on them.

We ought to ensure that the commission co-ordinates the work being done by various government departments and agencies and that the wheel simply is not being reinvented time and time again regarding arctic issues.

One ought to mention when the research was being done on the creation of this commission, there emerged from an inquiry across Canada an incredibly strong consensus by Canadians from all walks of life that a Canadian polar research commission was not only desirable, but required urgently. Whether we were hearing from polar researchers presently in place or from universities, industry, aboriginal leaders, politicians, govern-