

*Nuclear Liability*

these tests on behalf of Alaska. Despite this, nuclear testing continues. It has not stopped, it has just gone underground.

We can now look forward to the detonation of an atomic test proposed to be three times as large as the original test last fall. A stupid and possibly devastating nuclear escalation is now going on through ABM and related underground tests. I think these tests pose a potentially greater threat than anything that could be covered by this bill.

While this bill is an important measure dealing with the peaceful uses of atomic material, there is nothing in it that accords the public any kind of protection for the kind of things that occur when we have underground bomb tests and other tests which go on from time to time. Our Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) made some stern remarks lately about the United States moves which are euphemistically called defensive measures. I hope Canada's stance will be much more stern than the last time. I asked the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) a question regarding Amchitka on July 15 and he did not get around to sending a note to the United States about this matter until September 19.

I notice this bill includes exemption from liability for damage caused during times of war. I can understand why no insurance company would be interested in providing this protection during times of war, but I wonder about the fact that the bill appears to neglect the possibility of mishaps in military installations where ground-to-air missiles or other like atomic weapons are stocked for defensive purposes. I think the committee should consider this particular matter. I think while war is one situation, a possible mistake or error causing unlimited damage by atomic weapons stored on Canadian soil is certainly a very serious matter for Canadians to consider.

I could go into a great deal of detail about the possible threats of radiation, fall-out and genetic adjustment concerning the island of Amchitka, but perhaps this is beyond the purview of this bill. While I would like to express it because it concerns me and many other Canadians very greatly, I will not trespass upon Your Honour's good humour and get into that discussion at this time.

I feel that Canada has had a very good safety record with the nuclear installations in this country. We have had no major disaster associated with these reactors. Since we have had no major disaster concerning nuclear and fissionable installations, I wonder why the

insurance companies have been so reluctant to move into the protective field, and why it is necessary for the government to guarantee these insurance companies in the way it is planning to do in this bill. It seems if money were to be made and the risks were slight, this would be exactly the kind of situation into which the insurance companies would be delighted to move. Obviously, because the insurance companies have displayed reluctance up until now to get into this field, it has been necessary to produce a bill which would allow a limited liability backed by the government rather than an unlimited one.

This situation is closely paralleled by the oil spills on Canadian waters. As hon. members know, when we were considering the Canada Shipping Act, a subclause covering unlimited liability for such spills was taken out of the act on the grounds that no insurance company would cover all the damage caused by such a disaster. We are now faced with a potentially major disaster off Nova Scotia. Although the minister did assure me during the debate on the Canada Shipping Act that he would take this matter of unlimited liability to the international conference, which he did, the fact still remains that at the moment we have no real protection against the possibility of a commercial disaster of the proportions of the one which could possibly occur right now while I am speaking.

This may reflect the same kind of reasoning that is behind Bill C-158. It is because of the gargantuan costs involved in possible damages that no insurance company will cover them. In instances such as this a limited liability is imposed and the public must be responsible for any other remaining damage costs which result. The insurance companies will not cover this. They feel they cannot do so because the financial risks are too great. Whenever disasters of this kind take place the public, through taxes and other disaster measures are required to pick up the tab.

• (2:40 p.m.)

In case any hon. member feels there is no risk to atomic waste disposal, I wish to read a rather lengthy letter written to the editor of the *Montreal Star* recently by F. H. Knelman, chairman of the humanities of science, Sir George Williams University. It is headed: "The Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy—Perils of Pollution must be Emphasized." Mr. Knelman is replying to a letter from Dean R. E. Bell of McGill, commenting on an article by Mr. Knelman "Myth of the Peaceful Atom".