

*Transportation Accident Investigation Board*

So we must ensure that there is that mechanism there, not only in principle, but in reality as well.

I want to bring a different item to the attention of the Member in the area of spills. That is the spills of toxic substances in our waters generally. In the constituency that I represent is the St. Lawrence River, and there is the proud Indian community of Aquasasne on Cornwall Island which is partially in my riding and partially in the riding of my hon. friend. Across the river on the American side, there are a GM plant and two aluminum plants. Material is seeping into the St. Lawrence River sometimes by spills, sometimes from storage right on the shore which later leaches into the river system. It does not matter. One way or the other it still has the same toxic effect. We know the PCBs are in the St. Lawrence River and exactly where they are.

We know that the amount of leaching is increasing, but no one is doing anything about it. The Aquasasne community that lives there used to produce cattle and milk. They used to live off agriculture on the island. There got to be so much fluoride poisoning that they had to cease that. Then they were living off fishing and acting as guides for tourists. Now you cannot eat the fish because it is so polluted from those contaminants that I described that were either spilled, leached or otherwise got into the St. Lawrence River. We have social problems in that same community, and we wonder as a society why it is happening. Well, if we had to have a recipe for a disaster, we could not have planned it any better.

• (1620)

It is a most unfortunate event there, but it was caused by that kind of negligence to which the Hon. Member has referred. It is happening in my own constituency, this time not as a result of an oil spill, but as a result of a spill of a different kind.

**Mr. Walker:** Madam Speaker, the House will recognize that the Hon. Member has evolved as the ranking expert on having a public review of the investigation of airline crashes, particularly the one at Gander. In light of his expertise on this, would he comment on how this Act would pertain to the investigation of that particular crash if it was in place at the time?

I understand that when a military vehicle is involved the Government wishes to shift emphasis and have the Department of Transport as the leading and co-ordinating agency. Does my colleague believe that that would strengthen or weaken the role of the Government in reviewing accidents?

**Mr. Boudria:** Madam Speaker, I do not know if it will make that much difference. Of course, when we are dealing with military personnel there is always a certain sensitivity on the part of the military authorities, but I do not think that is justification for having different people do the work.

In the case of Gander, the United States military became involved very quickly. As a matter of fact, the day after the accident there was a request, a copy of which I have here, by a Major General John Crosbie of the U.S. military who wanted to bulldoze the site immediately. I have a copy of that letter.

Why did we see those kinds of activities? Is it because someone wanted to ensure that the site, which was for all intents and purposes a grave, was ploughed over as soon as possible in order not to disturb the people who died there, or was it for another reason? What could have been the reason for wanting to bulldoze over the site immediately after the accident, even before all the pieces had been picked up? Thankfully, the bulldozing was refused. If it had been accepted, much of the evidence, whatever little we were able to get from the accident, would not have been found. It would have been buried.

In the case of Gander, the autopsies were all done in the United States. The bodies were taken to the United States and autopsies were done there. While I objected to that process, even I have to recognize that, effectively, there was no way in which 256 autopsies could be done at that particular location. No one in that province had that kind of capacity.

There was an arrangement between the United States authorities and Canada by which all the bodies were flown to the United States and the autopsies were done there. Strangely enough, the autopsy reports which are compulsory for the issuing of death certificates in Newfoundland have never been brought back. Surely there has to be something wrong with that.