

*Oral Questions*

tices in labour relations, the answer I would want to give to the hon. gentleman, through you, would be that the position taken by the government is constructive, hopeful and responsible.

**Mr. Bosley:** Madam Speaker, perhaps it would be out of order to comment at the time whether that is a new position for the government.

My final supplementary question relates to the previous postmaster general's commitment to bring in a bill to turn the Post Office into a Crown corporation this spring, a commitment which everybody believes will go a long way toward resolving underlying labour problems in this area. Can the minister assure the House that we can expect to see such a bill this spring, and is that part of the conversation at today's meeting?

**Mr. Regan:** Again I thank the hon. member. I cannot say whether the question of the establishment of a Crown corporation is part of the negotiations that are going on this afternoon: only the Postmaster General would be able to report after the fact on what is being considered at that moment in time. But I can assure the hon. member that preparations for legislation in relation to establishing the Post Office as a Crown corporation are going forward and that, indeed, negotiations are under way with various groups to soften the impact of the dislocation involved in such a change, including the union groups, in totally separate committee negotiations that are going on and involving my department as well as that of the Postmaster General at present.

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● (1420)

## NORTHERN AFFAIRS

### OIL EXPLORATION IN BEAUFORT SEA—DANGER OF SPILLS

**Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa):** Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. On the weekend, the director of environmental affairs for Petro-Canada confirmed the criticism of the Arctic Waters Advisory Committee that the federal government has failed to develop adequate plans or technology to prevent and cope with an oil spill in the Beaufort Sea. This is a matter I raised last week with the Prime Minister.

Considering that this person from Petro-Canada, and also a spokesperson for the advisory committee who helped draft the report confirmed its accuracy on the weekend, I should like to ask the minister if he could tell us why his government has given approval for drilling to proceed at this time in the light of such information?

**Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** Madam Speaker, I would advise the hon. Leader of the New Democratic Party, first, that the report of the advisory committee was considered by cabinet. The report the hon. member is referring to now, and was

referred to when I was in the eastern Arctic last week, is a report of one member who was party to the committee.

Somehow that report was, I guess, leaked; I do not know, and I really do not particularly care, other than to assure the hon. member that the report of the advisory committee itself was thoroughly reviewed by the officials of my department, the interdepartmental committee that judges these matters and by myself. It was taken to cabinet by myself for review. I might say that all the reviews taken with respect to the report of the advisory committee were such as to assure me, and I am thoroughly satisfied that no undue risks are being taken with respect to the program we announced for this ensuing season.

**Mr. Broadbent:** Madam Speaker, all members of Parliament received today in the mail an expensive, 44-page brochure called "Under the Beaufort". There are a number of errors in it, two of them very serious in their implications. At one point, the brochure indicates the following:

—there is a complex contingency plan ready to meet the danger and to clean up any oil spill.

That is what the brochure which has been put out by the government indicates; but the report of the advisory committee to which the minister has just referred indicates just the opposite, that there is no such contingency plan. That is one contradiction I should like the minister to clear up. Another one is that in the brochure it is indicated that there were only two fuel spills last year during the drilling. The report of the advisory committee, which the minister has said he looked at with care, indicates that there were no fewer than 22 spills.

Considering that these alleged facts contradict each other—and I, for one, am inclined to accept the report of the advisory committee that there have been more spills than we are now being told, and that there is no contingency plan—would the minister please explain to the House this very serious contradiction?

**Mr. Munro (Hamilton East):** Madam Speaker, I would also advise the hon. member that I raised this question. I think the number of spills referred to by the hon. member and those referred to in the report are exaggerated. I am told and advised that there were no serious spills which caused any great damage or concern in the previous season.

The technology has advanced considerably since that time. There are safeguards now with respect to relief-well drilling for this season—technology of the kind that has improved over last year, so that if there was some risk taken last year with respect to the policy, there is even less risk this year as a result of that improved technology. Also, as I understand it, some assurance was given that I would be before the standing committee later this week—I think it is Thursday night—and I would be prepared to go into the matter more fully at that time.

● (1425)

**Mr. Broadbent:** Madam Speaker, I listened with care to the minister's answer, and at no point did he say that the government has ready a contingency plan that would cope with a