

Supply

have a fabulous environment in this country. It is the greatest thing that Canada has. David Suzuki and other Canadians are telling us that we are starting to ruin and waste it in the modern world. We all share that problem and are guilty of it. That is why we speak with some passion, not to attack the Minister personally, but to get the Minister and the Government moving. We want some concrete action on this PCB spill and on protection of the great environment of Canada in the future.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, knowing parliamentary procedure, I of course would not comment on the Member's presence in the House at the start of the Minister's speech. In not saying that, I would like to say that it is normal for the Opposition critic to be here for the start of the Minister's speech in response to the motion introduced. Why did the Member not take the opportunity to ask questions at the close of the Minister's speech today?

Mr. Waddell: Mr. Speaker, I was not here at the beginning of the Minister's speech. I was listening to it outside.

Some Hon. Members: Shame, shame!

Mr. Waddell: The Member cannot have it both ways. He cannot attack me for raising it. There are certain matters that arise which require the Minister to be in the House responding in Question Period. When I was on holidays in the States a few weeks ago—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lewis: What a confession!

Mr. Waddell: That was when we had a vacation at Easter. At that time there was a food poisoning scare in Chicago and the medical officer was in Mexico for a few days. He was probably fired. If I were the Prime Minister and my Minister of the Environment were not present when an important issue such as this came up, I would fire her. However, that is the way the Government conducts itself.

Did the Member have another question?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maily: Mr. Speaker, I would remind the Hon. Member said that since he was not present he could not have heard the minister's comments and this may explain his misunderstanding of the contents of the debate. In her comments, the Minister made it clear that the statute involved in the Kenora incident is the Hazardous Products Transportation Act rather than the Environment Act, the latter covering toxic products only as far as the manufacturing and processing of certain chemicals are concerned. Had he been in this House, he would have been able to understand the reason why the Minister perhaps was not present on a certain day, when a certain question was addressed to her, because she was working with her provincial counterpart—rather than fighting him as was the practice under the previous administration. The Minister was looking for an agreement on how to solve a problem that

does not now come under the federal statute but that will as of July, when we have new regulations that hopefully will help us prevent tragedies such as the one in Kenora. I simply wanted to stress this fact. The Minister quite clearly said so earlier.

Secondly, there was something else the Minister said while he was not in this House, namely that, contrary to what the Hon. Member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia) has suggested, she met very early with Mr. Thomson, the representative for EPA, the Environment Protection Agency, soon after he was appointed. He was appointed in February and she met with him in March. This is a record as far as consultation and conciliation are concerned, since the previous Liberal administration not only would not agree with the provincial government but would seem unable to promote any understanding between officials of both governments.

To conclude, I also wish to ask him a question: Does he remember, when the discussion on the question that was very recently settled by the Minister when it was announced that there would be a 50 per cent reduction of carbon monoxide waste, yes, does he remember when the study was launched by the previous Liberal administration? And also, does he remember when the discussion on the control of automobile exhaust gases was initiated at a time when the issue was before the previous Liberal administration? I look forward to hearing his answer, and I would also like him to comment on the fact that the previous Liberal administration gave so little attention to the environment that there was just one Minister in charge of Science, Technology and Environment, while in this Government we have a full-fledged Minister for Environment, and whether in his view it makes a difference to have a full-fledged Minister heading such a department, contrary to the previous administration?

• (1230)

Mr. Waddell: Yes, I remember the car emission issue, because I was a member of the Committee on National Resources and Public Works in 1981. While on this committee, I moved an amendment to a Liberal sponsored bill calling for a tightening up of the car emission standards, and I believe that Conservatives members voted against it. Now, I am glad that emission standards have been tightened up, something for which the government must be praised. However—

Mrs. Maily: Thank you!

[*English*]

Mr. Waddell: May I remind the House that I proposed it a few years before and it voted against it.

Some action has been taken, such as with the standards and pollution control. However, nothing has really been done with respect to acid rain in the American context. I suggest that the appointment of Bill Davis was a cop-out which will only lead to further study.