

Request for Environmental Council

• (1750)

I should like to point out also that as regards the preparation of the Stockholm conference, Canada is among the 27 countries chosen by the UN General Assembly to be part of a committee responsible for preparing the Stockholm conference, drafting the agenda of the meeting and defining the discussion areas, for the question of environment is in itself such a vast subject that it would be ridiculous to believe that all the environment problems will be solved during the few days the conference will last. They must limit themselves to the most urgent and pressing questions.

It might be useful to recall also that the main object of the Stockholm conference is to call the attention of all nations of the world on the urgency of considering the serious question of pollution.

We are fortunate in that a Canadian, Mr. Maurice Strong, will act as secretary general at the Stockholm conference. Mr. Strong took up his duties a little more than a year ago. It was obviously a great challenge for him because people were saying here and there in the corridors of the United Nations that the Stockholm conference would be a failure. I believe it is to the credit of Mr. Strong—shared by Canada, obviously—that he not only made the conference possible but prepared it so well that one can now state that it will unquestionably begin on June 5.

One of the main tasks of the 27 nations' preparatory committee was to suggest to the secretariat of the conference, in Geneva, methods, plans and proposals which were sent last week to all members of the United Nations so they may consider them and state their position.

The public opinion soundings which the Canadian government intends to hold in the country will be part of the data which the Canadian delegation will bring to Stockholm on June 5.

I must say that it is in all seriousness and with an open mind that the Canadian government intends to sound out the public. It is not some form of window dressing, as it has been commonly stated in the English press. We really want to know what Canadians think because we feel that they are deeply concerned about the matter. We know that they will be in a position to contribute greatly to the development of our official position in Stockholm.

Mr. Speaker, I could speak at length on the Stockholm conference. To windup my comments, I wish to remind hon. members that it would be ridiculous on the part of the government to strengthen its position when only a few months separate us from direct consultation with the people. Canada should adopt a basically resilient position which she should probably maintain to the end. A great deal of compromise will have to take place, even though we could count on certain concessions at Stockholm. However, the Canadian government has certainly in mind that there should be a consensus on the adoption of measures, of recommendation and, if possible, of a universal declaration concerning human environment that would likely be ratified by all nations that are conscious of the serious problem of pollution.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to touch briefly on a subject that has been raised in this House by the hon. member for

[Mr. Corbin.]

Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forrester) who is unfortunately absent at this time and which has given rise to several questions in the last few days.

Reference has been made—

[English]

Reference was made in this debate to the 15 cents a ton levy on oil for the creation of a pollution clean-up fund of approximately \$25 million. I say this with some reservation, but if I heard the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forrester) correctly he referred to the amendments to the Canada Shipping Act as a bad piece of legislation, or at least he did not think a great deal of it. It is possible that he was present at the detailed study of this bill by the special committee on pollution, but I do not remember seeing him there.

It seems to me that there was not much contribution to that exercise, either in committee or in the House, by opposition members from New Brunswick. It is rather unfair, therefore, to come here today and say it is a bad piece of legislation. As one who attended all the sittings of the committee when it studied that bill, I cannot agree with the position taken by some hon. members. We studied the legislation at length and in depth.

I certainly recognize the merit of the motion now before us. The mover of the motion worked very hard on the amendments to the Canada Shipping Act. I recall that most members supported that legislation in the House. Some of them said that to vote against it would be the same as voting against motherhood. But they do not say that today. There is now a Tory government in New Brunswick; that may be the difference. The legislation has been in force for a number of months and perhaps as an afterthought they now say it is bad legislation.

Members opposite made sure they were present when Mr. K. C. Irving, his three sons and a battery of lawyers appeared before our committee to make representations on the legislation. I respect Mr. Irving as any good New Brunswicker should. I respected him enough to question him time and again on this legislation to which he was opposed. He had some personal interest in the legislation. This is fair: that is what the work of the committee is all about, to listen to people who have a personal interest in the laws which we attempt to pass in this House. All the Tory members from New Brunswick added their two-bits of questioning to the record. They then left and did not return for our many hardworking sessions in studying and dissecting the bill. And today they cry "Injustice"!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but his time has expired. The hon. member for Carleton-Charlotte (Mr. Flemming).

Mr. Flemming: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if any hon. member would object if I called it six o'clock.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): There would be an objection if you did not.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): It being six o'clock, I do now leave the chair.

At six o'clock the House took recess.