

Oil Pollution

that it was time the government of this country and an aroused people behind it took the position that Canada will not stand for tankers coming through Pacific waters. It may be said that we are just battling against shadows and that the United States will not pay any attention. But if some of us and the government would start doing this sort of thing, we might be joined by other governments. Some have shown that they have a little backbone even against the great United States.

I noticed in yesterday's newspapers a report that the Swedish prime minister, at the environmental meeting in Stockholm, without naming the United States had made abundantly clear where he stood on the outrage and the immense destruction brought about by indiscriminate bombing and the large-scale use of bulldozers and herbicides. He said it was of paramount importance that ecological warfare cease immediately. The United States recognized that the cap fitted and were enraged diplomatically because the prime minister of a little country like Sweden had dared make remarks which could refer only to them.

If Sweden could be joined by Canada and one or two other countries who pride themselves on being international powers, if our minister who is in Sweden now told some of the things that should be told about oil slicks and urged that the environment is more important than the provision of additional facilities for corporations to bring oil down the west coast, then we might get somewhere internationally. We will not get anywhere while we merely strike attitudes, take up positions and go with polite little notes to the United States.

I have consulted the record about what is going on, at least as far as one can in view of the cloak of secrecy surrounding these matters. On February 9, 1971, the hon. member for Fraser Valley West tried to get some information from the Secretary of State for External Affairs and received the following reply as recorded at page 3232 of *Hansard*:

I do not think it would be appropriate for us as a federal government to appear before any U.S. tribunal that is considering these questions, any more than we would consider it appropriate for the American government to appear before our tribunals. Our contacts must be much more direct. I am sure the hon. member recognizes the question of the dignity of our government in dealing with the governments of other countries.

• (1620)

There are times when something is more important than dignity and this is one of those times. The survival of this country is at stake. The minister can smile as much as he likes, but he knows perfectly well how British Columbians feel about this. If he had more intestinal fortitude he would tell the Secretary of State for External Affairs that sending polite notes is not enough, and merely referring these matters to the IJC is not sufficient. I think a proper way of handling this business would be by bringing forward the sort of motion that is suggested in the publication *Perspective*, which is put out by an anti-pollution organization on the coast. In their May issue they say:

We feel that prevention will be the best medicine for the problem. The half million dollars spent on the *Vanlene* oil clean-up—

That was the spill previous to this one.
—could have been used to begin installation of radar along the
[Mrs. MacInnis.]

west coast for the ministry of transport to monitor the approach of ocean-going vessels, and inform the captains of their positions as they near the coast-line. The captain of the *Vanlene* thought he was grounded on the coast of Washington. Canada must take immediate action to keep the rust-buckets like the *Vanlene* from entering Canadian waters without proper functioning guidance equipment. It is not worth the cost to the taxpayers for British Columbia harbours to seek increased trade with ships that could just as well end up on the rocks as in the harbour.

Then they say:

It would be an ironical situation for the federal government to proclaim a national underwater park in the Gulf of Georgia and not protect it from the potential polluters floating above.

If supertankers are permitted to travel along the coast of British Columbia it is only a matter of time before one of them runs aground.

The resultant spill will be 50 times worse than the 330 tons spilled by the *Vanlene*. The ecological and economical destruction would be disastrous.

Then they suggest a motion for setting up a committee formed of citizens from the Canadian side of the border as well as from the American side which would delve into the Cherry Point disaster and other matters, find the facts, make recommendations and then as a joint citizen group from both sides of the border bring pressure to bear on both governments jointly and make them act.

I know that on the government side of the House there is a great lack of respect for ordinary, organized citizens. Nevertheless, if we are to deal effectively with the United States I think we must encourage such voluntary citizen groups to do their work. Citizens must be informed, they must be organized and they must stand behind their government. What is the sense of sending polite notes to the United States government, to members of Congress, to the President or to anybody else unless the American government knows that Canadians are ready and willing to support their government in these efforts? The Skagit business is staring us in the face. The IJC is supposed to have made a report. And what has been the result? The government has done absolutely nothing. I suggest nothing will be done on either side of the border until enough citizens groups become concerned, stand behind those who are concerned about pollution and demand that something be done.

Only a few minutes remain to me, Mr. Speaker. May I say this. We need new priorities in this country, priorities different from those this government espouses. The government's top priority is that of economic profitability for corporations—oil corporations in this instance. The government adheres to that priority even though it results in ecological disaster for the west coast.

Mr. Howard (Skeena): What do they care?

Mrs. MacInnis: We must change that. We must speak out and stand firm in our dealings with this government and the government across the border. We have had one *Arrow* disaster. We know what that disaster meant for the people of the area concerned. How many more disasters like Chedabucto Bay and Cherry Point must there be before the government realizes that setting up equipment to deal with pollution when it occurs is not enough? We must prevent these disasters and as our first line of defence we must stop the big supertankers from coming in large numbers down the west coast. It can be done if