

Oil and Gas Act

• (3:30 p.m.)

In view of the situation caused last week by the oil tanker which grounded off the west coast of Nova Scotia, surely no one in this chamber would dare challenge the right of the Canadian government, acting for the people, to reassert our rights and say: Passage you may have, but passage on conditions which we, in our right as trustees for the Canadian people, must lay down.

We hear talk about tankers of 300,000 tons. In the name of heaven, what complete destruction, in an ecological and environmental way, would be caused by a tanker of this size being wrecked while attempting a so-called unimpeded voyage through the Arctic waters! We do not ask this government to break new ground. We simply ask it to stand up for the rights of the people of Canada and reassert what has always been accepted in the past. I refer to the sovereignty, even in a limited way, of Canada and over these waters, not for narrow nationalism but to protect the rights of our people and the hope that in the future the north will develop as it should, uncontaminated by the dreadful results of the type of disasters which could take place.

We heard that when the *Manhattan* reached home she had two or three large holes, one large enough to drive a truck through. I am instructed that the holes were in places where oil tanks would normally be. This ship was only able to complete her voyage with the aid of the Canadian ice-breaker. These are the facts we are placing before the House. Surely the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) would admit that they made a mistake by refusing to take this position earlier. Surely they can accept the recommendation of the Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development, the members of which were there, saw the situation, heard evidence and looked into the legal situation. The committee, in a reasoned, objective and non-partisan way made a recommendation which must be accepted. I believe if the question were put to a vote in the House, it would pass with a very substantial majority.

We are asking that the amendments which are included within the four corners of Bill S-5 be not proceeded with at this time. We are not denying that in a technical way and for certain technical reasons there are advantages to these amendments. We say, however, they should not be proceeded with and that

the House should use this occasion to demonstrate to the government that the people of Canada object very strongly to the attitude of the government in failing to make the declaration which it should make in order to justify our claim to sovereignty over these waters.

At one time I dismissed hon. members opposite as coming within the interpretation of the Vice-President of the United States when he referred to the silent majority. They are now speaking up. Hopefully, this is a good sign for the House. I urge hon. members opposite to support the amendment of the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka and say to the government that it should not proceed with this bill. The government should first accept what the committee has recommended and, second, it should bring before this House for debate the legislation which the Prime Minister indicated will be introduced in respect of the pollution of our northern waters.

That legislation should be brought down and we should debate it. Let us first accept the recommendations of the committee and then, Mr. Speaker, we can deal with this matter. In that sense I plead with hon. members of this House to accept this amendment.

Mr. Thomas S. Barnett (Comox-Alberni): Mr. Speaker, I was a member of the Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development which drafted and presented to the House a report on Arctic sovereignty which, as has been mentioned several times, had the unanimous endorsement of all the members of that committee. Therefore, I believe it should be apparent that I am as concerned as any member of the House that we should make a clear declaration of Canadian sovereignty over the waters which lie between the islands of the Arctic archipelago.

I took an active part in the debate on the amendments to the Canada Shipping Act. Had those amendments passed, they would have placed the liability for the cost of incidents such as occurred off the coast of Nova Scotia—I refer to the break-up of the *Arrow* oil tanker—on the owners of the vessel or cargo. Therefore, I do not quarrel at all with the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) with regard to the need for exercising complete Canadian control over the passage of oil tankers through Arctic waters.

I have often enjoyed the reasoned and cogent arguments presented in this House by the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka (Mr. Aiken) and the hon. member for Peace