

Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act

the turn of the century, we occupied in fact all the islands in the Arctic. North of the 60th parallel, the Canadian government has been present continuously on each of those islands, and its presence has never been challenged. We are present on each and every Arctic island, for officials of my department, R.C.M.P. officers and officials of the Department of Transport employed in meteorological research centres are stationed there.

In addition, for a long time now we, in Canada, have adopted legislation that applies to all the Arctic islands and to the whole continental shelf within the Arctic.

For instance, I have in mind the legislation governing the granting of permits for oil exploration. In fact, in the Northwest Territories, the government has granted permits to American, French, Japanese, German, British or other foreign corporations which have interests in the area, which means that the effective control of Canadian lands north of the 60th parallel, has been established for a very long time. I cannot see how this amendment which deals with Canadian lands could then be in order in view of the circumstances.

It is a bill, as I said earlier, which deals with pollution and which provides that Canada must assume specific responsibilities with regard to the arctic waters, even beyond Canadian territorial waters.

My colleague the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) has introduced a bill which was passed in this House and the purpose of which was to provide that our territorial waters would extend to a limit of 12 miles off the coasts of Canada:

The bill under consideration goes a little further but it assumes only part of the jurisdiction, that is to say that because of our direct responsibility in the field of ecology in the North, we have chosen to prevent risks of pollution. In fact, as giant tankers could some day sail through northern waters, we have decided to take unilateral action so as to prevent pollution because, in our opinion, international law was developing much too slowly. We have had experiences in that respect. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) right here in this House said on that subject: "First, we must have consultations with the United Nations. Then, he went to New York last September, I think, to discuss this problem with U Thant, the Secretary General to the United Nations, and his visit was followed by the Brussels conference on the law of the sea. The results of this conference indicated clear-

ly that we could not get, in the near future, an international pollution control scheme on the high seas because often during those international conferences on the law of the sea, countries having ships or fleets are the ones that are most interested rather than those with coasts to protect, which is something entirely new nowadays. A few years ago, protecting coasts against pollution was not a problem but today it is a very serious one.

I am no expert in procedure like my hon. friend, but I believe this amendment goes far beyond the scope of this bill, which already received unanimous approval from the House. Now we are told today that what was unanimously approved a few months ago is not valid anymore and that we should amend the bill all over so that it would not only deal with pollution but would control many fields already controlled through other statutes, for instance the one concerning territorial waters as well as the one controlling oil and mineral research in the North.

For those reasons I contend this motion is probably out of order, as the Chair had suspected it to be, and I cannot see why we should engage in a long debate on something that has absolutely nothing to do with the piece of legislation now before us.

[*English*]

Mr. Baldwin: May I ask the minister a question? Does he not realize—I am very serious about this—that by accepting this amendment, which in effect says that the bill is not in any way deemed to be an abandonment of any claims to sovereignty which did exist, this House is strengthening the arm of the government in all of these international negotiations and discussions which may be taking place? When it comes to talking to the United States or to the United Nations, does the minister not realize we are strengthening the government's hands in these negotiations?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, concerning the question asked by the hon. member, it is not simply a matter of accepting or rejecting the amendment. In my opinion, from a procedural standpoint, this amendment goes beyond the scope of the bill which has just been introduced. It is not a matter of wanting or not wanting to accept the amendment, it is a matter of fact: according to the established procedure, this amendment cannot be accepted.