



CANADA

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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CANADA LEADS THE FIGHT AGAINST POLLUTION

Part of an Address by Prime Minister the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau to the Annual Meeting of The Canadian Press in Toronto on April 15, 1970.

...If part of our heritage is our wilderness, and if the measure of Canada is the quality of the life available to Canadians, then we must act should there be any threat to either. We must act to protect the freshness of our air and the purity of our water; we must act to conserve our living resources. If necessary, we must offer leadership to the world in these respects and withstand the cries of complaining vested interests. We have offered that leadership in the Arctic Pollution Bill introduced last week. The bill, I suggest, is a good example of Canada acting in a responsible manner in a vitally important area.

The Arctic ice-pack has been described as the most significant surface area of the globe, for it controls the temperature of much of the northern hemisphere. Its continued existence in unspoiled form is vital to all mankind. The single most imminent threat to the Arctic at this time is that of a large oil-spill. Not only are the hazards of Arctic navigation much greater than are found elsewhere, making the risk of break-up or sinking one of constant concern, but any major maritime tragedy there would have disastrous and irreversible consequences. The deleterious effects to the environment of a major oil-spill would be so much greater than those of a spill of similar size in temperate or tropical waters that the result can be said with scientific accuracy to be qualitatively different. For example, the injuries which would result cannot be measured in terms of dollars, as they can elsewhere, because the damages would not be of a temporary nature. Nor is there now known any technique or process which can control, dispel or reduce vagrant oil loose in Arctic waters. Such oil would spread immediately beneath ice many feet thick; it would congeal and block the breathing holes of the peculiar species of mammal that frequent the region; it would destroy effectively the primary source of food for Eskimos and carnivorous wildlife throughout an area of thousands of square miles; it would foul and destroy the only known nesting areas of several species of wild birds.