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This is a very serious matter. It is not the Government's fault, but the Canadian people expect action, not nonsense and pious statements. The first and best action would be to fire the Minister of the Environment who has completely failed up to this point. As for the Minister of Transport, let him explain how he has cut back in his Department. He says, "Our ships are ready to go," but how many ships does he have?

The last great amount of shipbuilding in this country has been on the East coast and it has been for Canadian frigates. It was promised four years ago that a Canadian Coast Guard vessel, the *Polar 8*, would be built off the British Columbia coast. They have not even laid the keel yet. Is there a suggestion that perhaps Quebec will get that contract? I do not want to believe that, but if they are building frigates on the Quebec coast, they can at least complete that extra Coast Guard ship that has been killed month after month by this Government. If the Minister truly believes that he is committed to developing a Coast Guard, why have not we had that *Polar 8* contract granted to the Province of British Columbia?

Do you not know where we are, Mr. Speaker? We are part of Canada too. We belong to the family of Canadians. We do not make any special appeal. We do not demand something just because we are where we are. But when something happens to us, we expect fairness, decency, responsibility and understanding, and we sure as heck have not seen that from this Government when it comes to the oil spills off the West coast.

I want to conclude by just making a few remarks about the results of the election in western Canada and the election of a Reform Party candidate who is sitting over there. Yes, there is just one Member. Yes, it is just a little rump group. It is the voice of the West, along with other election results, saying that this federal Government is a failure. Right wingers voted for reform candidates. They ignored the Liberals. The centre and the left voted for New Democrats. There are 19 New Democrats here from British Columbia, Mr. Speaker. Do not think it is an isolated provincial Party after the next federal election. Unless this Government moves there will be dozens more NDPers right across this country, including the Province of Quebec, where you have been a failure, Mr. Speaker.

• (2230)

The politics of pollution know no provincial boundaries. I warn you, Mr. Speaker, that the people of British Columbia and the people of western Canada expect more from a government, more than what this Minister has shown. I am proud of the Hon. Member for Skeena forcing this debate. I am ashamed that the Minister had to respond in this debate instead of leading it with a statement long before today.

Hon. Mary Collins (Associate Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I found it very interesting listening to the Hon. Member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca (Mr. Barrett). I am very pleased he was not blaming the Government for the oil spill because having listened to some of the debate earlier this evening I think those Canadians who were listening to it might have had the impression the opposition Parties were somehow blaming us for a very tragic event that took place near Valdez, Alaska. Certainly it is not the Government's fault that it happened. That is not, of course, to underestimate the great concern we have as Canadians and as a Government about this very tragic incident. What is particularly of concern in my mind is that obviously it appears as though it were the result of human error. It was not an act of God. It was not necessarily weather conditions, it was what appears to be the possibility of untrained or improperly trained personnel taking the ship into an area where it should not have gone.

I guess as a Member from British Columbia and having represented Capilano—Howe Sound for the last five years I can assure my colleagues of the great concern that I and my colleagues from British Columbia have about environmental issues in our province and particularly the oil spill in Alaska and the earlier oil spill that took place off the West Coast in January. I think that tonight during this debate we want to let Canadians know what happened, what actions are being taken, and also to discuss what might possibly be done in the future to prevent these kinds of tragedies taking place. As my colleagues, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. Siddon), the Minister of Transport (Mr. Bouchard) and the Minister for the Environment (Mr. Bouchard) have said, first we have to recognize that it is extremely unlikely—although nothing is impossible from all of the evidence we have at this point—that any of the oil from this recent oil spill will actually hit the coastal waters of British Columbia and have a direct impact there.