

*Motion for Papers*

period in which pollution interrupted their livelihood. I hope the fishermen themselves will recognize this, and that they will repay our loans so that this procedure of the Canadian people helping fishermen over a difficult period can be repeated if we ever run into a pollution problem of this kind again.

I hope we will be able to anticipate situations such as this and prevent them, although we can never be sure. With an amended Fisheries Act we will be able to move with certainty. We will be able to draw up guidelines, and with increased staff and increased competence we will be able to monitor situations like this to make sure that a Placentia Bay problem does not recur.

**Mr. Barnett:** Mr. Speaker, the minister referred to anticipated events. Can he tell us in a few words what has been done to anticipate possible pollution from the oil installations which I understand are in the process of being placed in the Placentia Bay region?

**Mr. Davis:** The department endeavours to keep abreast of industrial development, to watch situations where new mines are opening up, where new processing plants are about to be installed, where new manufacturing operations are beginning and to contact the firms in question. But in the great majority of cases—I would say in 99 cases out of 100—where the chemical industry or a major mining operation is involved, the companies come to the Department of Fisheries and Forestry. We have the biologists, the people competent to assess the marine resources, who are in the best position to say whether the effluent will affect fish life.

The Fisheries Research Board and other officers in the department can express opinions as to whether the effluent will be harmful. A company then instructs its engineers to design its pollution treatment equipment to meet the standards which our biologists set. This is being done more or less on an informal, ad hoc basis, particularly in British Columbia.

Today no company in its right mind which has any expectation of discharging a toxic substance or any other effluent which is harmful to fish, into waters over which we have any direct jurisdiction, would pass up the opportunity of talking to our people first and of making sure that what is likely to be discharged will not incur a fine or cause serious damage to fish and other forms of marine life. This type of liaison is growing. It is being developed by the companies in self-defence,

but there is also novelty here. This is a new trend. It is a new kind of liaison confined to the last few years. Companies now come to the fisheries department to talk about their problems and to do the right thing. This is all to the good, but I still think we need a Fisheries Act with teeth in it and we need more staff to be able to administer this aspect of pollution control more effectively.

• (5:30 p.m.)

**Mr. Carter:** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might ask a question. The minister stated that his department did not have enough knowledge to prevent this type of pollution. I wonder if he would not agree that in light of experience with similar plants in England and one in Ontario, the department should have imposed more stringent regulations to prevent the problem arising to the extent it did last year in Placentia Bay.

**Mr. Davis:** I think the hon. member is right to the extent that if the department had known what it knows now, when Electric Reduction Company first applied a couple of years ago it would have insisted that the effluent be kept within the plant. I am quite sure that in future when our people are approached for an opinion by a chemical-type industry, they will demand that any waste material leaving the plant is in the safest possible condition and that the maximum treatment occurs within the plant itself.

Hindsight is wonderful, but a lot has been discovered in the last 12 months about the operation of phosphorus plants which was not known previously. We have investigated a few situations both in this country and overseas where there has been negligence, and it seems that no one was overly concerned about the effects of phosphorus in those places. Now everyone is. They will be in the future if a similar installation is proposed elsewhere.

**Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena):** Mr. Speaker, you have been extremely generous, and I think properly so, because the subject matter raised by the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Carter) and dealt with by the minister extends beyond Placentia Bay and beyond the Electric Reduction Company plant. The minister recognizes this.

As the minister said, hindsight is a wonderful thing to fall back on, but generally speaking we do not seem to learn from it how to take proper precautions for the future. It