

S. O. 52

• (2140)

We have seen in the case of caribou the effects of the oil making its way through the food chain. Who is going to foot the bill? What kind of criminal charges in the United States courts and in the international courts will be faced by the company? It is not enough to say that an individual who was off the ship or on the ship, who is turning himself in as responsible, was employed by a company. That company also was working with another company which had a legal, moral and ethical responsibility to ensure (a) there was a system in place to prevent the kinds of spills we have seen and (b) if a spill should occur that there should be an immediate system in place to try and clean it up. Five hours later they didn't even have a boat on site. That simply is not good enough.

What we have seen from the Canadian Government tonight, from the absence of the Prime Minister, from the Minister of the Environment who still has not spoken, is excuses, back-peddalling, and basically singing the company line. The Minister of Transport sounded like an apologist for Exxon. It is about time we got back to the central issue of the last election campaign.

Who is going to speak for Canada? Who is going to speak for British Columbia? Who is going to speak for the fishermen? Who is going to speak for all those residents who see their life-blood and their children's future threatened as a result of absolutely no systems in place by the Canadian Government?

I am sorry if the Members from British Columbia do not appreciate the assistance of critics from other Parties on an issue that is of national importance. If you see this simply as a British Columbia issue, maybe you are a B.C. rump.

I believe this is an issue of national importance. I do not think it should simply be a British Columbia issue. That is why I was most happy to rise and stand in my place and ask the Government and the Minister of the Environment to stand up and speak for Canada, to start bringing in some specific legislation. Get the Prime Minister to pick up the phone and talk to the President of the United States and agree on a bilateral treaty that will deal with these very crucial issues. Extend the moratorium off the coast of British Columbia and start dealing with facts and actions.

[Translation]

It is not enough to say: "I am concerned". I have had enough of expressions of concern. What I want now is action. We expect action from the Minister and we of the Liberal Party are ready to support the government if ever it decides to react.

Mr. Speaker: Order! I believe we have a point of order. The Hon. Member from Kamloops (Mr. Riis).

[English]

Mr. Riis: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This unquestionably is one of the most important debates of this session of Parliament.

It is common knowledge that we regularly change our regulations and Standing Orders to facilitate the business being done in the House at that moment. The Standing Orders will sever this debate at twelve o'clock. There are 32 Members of Parliament from British Columbia and many others who will want to participate in this debate. Under the existing rules fewer than 12 will participate.

I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if you would not seek the unanimous consent of the House to allow Members to speak on this very critical issue and important debate and not see the clock hit twelve o'clock so that each Member be allowed to express their views on this issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Just so that Hon. Members and the public watching will understand, the Hon. Member for Kamloops has asked for unanimous consent to extend the hours of this debate beyond twelve midnight.

Under the rules, we are bound to close the debate at twelve midnight unless another motion is put between eleven and twelve o'clock for an extension of the debate. If it is opposed, it must be opposed by 15 Members rising. However, the Hon. Member for Kamloops has risen and asked the House for unanimous consent to agree to extend debate beyond the twelve midnight deadline. That is the issue before the House.

The Hon. Minister was seeking the floor.

Mr. Charest: Might I suggest that the proposition put by the Hon. Member for Kamloops (Mr. Riis) is a bit premature. He refers to the fact that we have until midnight to debate this issue and that there are Members in the House who do want to speak. We are more than two hours away from midnight. I am not saying that we will exclude it. We may want to entertain some accommodations.