

Those are my few comments on this bill. I think, by and large, the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act is being administered reasonably well but we must continue to monitor it as more and more shipping goes through Arctic waters.

● (1640)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Loiselle (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, the amendment to the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act, as proposed by Bill C-207, does not seem to correspond to the nature and objectives of the act. The suggested transfer of the powers of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Munro) and the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) to the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Roberts) is doubtless founded on an erroneous interpretation of the act considered solely from the point of view of pollution prevention.

In fact, the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act was conceived as the perfect tool for protecting and managing our resources. Administering the whole therefore requires a multidisciplinary approach. The act, as formulated, aims at serving the exceptional needs of the north. On April 16, 1970, the hon. Jean Chrétien, then minister of Indian affairs and northern development, described this act to the House as a legitimate and necessary extension offshore of the jurisdiction of Canada over an area which concerns Canada only. In his opinion the act should continue to reflect the past policies of the successive governments of Canada to protect Canadian interests north of the 60th parallel, for the natives living there, for the untapped resources we want to develop there for the benefit of all Canadians, and for the natural quality of the land and water that cover more than 40 per cent of the Canadian territory. In expounding this theme, Mr. Chrétien stressed that the effect of the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act would be to have people understand that the north-west passage should be open to ships from all countries, providing on the other hand the necessary conditions to protect the fragile environmental balance of the Canadian Arctic and to set out clearly for all countries the requirements under which Canada, as a coastal state and because of its exceptional responsibilities to safeguard the northern environment, would welcome foreign ships in its waters.

In passing the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act, Parliament supported the point of view that that act is not only a legislative instrument for the prevention of water pollution but also an instrument of resource management to help in the pursuit of a complex set of objectives, including national security and sovereignty as well as economic expansion—the answer to the social and political aspirations of the residents of the north, as well as the development of the transportation technology to support those objectives. Such a major thrust

Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act

requires, of course, a broad variety of expertise and experience in the responsible agencies. The Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development must first enforce the sections of the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act not dealing with navigation since it has long been the responsibility of the department to meet the particular and varied needs of northern Canada as a whole and he had already put in place the necessary administrative and judicial provisions. Parliament recognized the direct relationship between the act and all maritime transportation in the north by appointing the Minister of Transport to share the responsibilities of implementing the act with the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

In the decade just ended, since the passage of the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act, we have seen many changes and considerable progress. One of the more striking examples is, of course, the huge effort by industry, supported and regulated by the government of Canada, to explore and develop the vast hydrocarbon potential in the Arctic waters; the discoveries in the Beaufort Sea and in the waters which surround the Arctic Islands, as well as very promising indications in the offshore areas of eastern Arctic have shown the importance of these resources for the future of Canada. The development of the Nanisivik mine on Baffin Island has given us an idea of the potential for mining development in the north.

These developments and potential for future economic development in both Canadian and American jurisdictions have brought about increasing pressures for the creation of a more effective and economically viable transportation infrastructure to get the oil, natural gas and minerals of these new facilities to the market. The Canadian Arctic waters have therefore acquired a significant importance for a variety of new interests, and this increased importance has brought about a greater awareness of pollution due to accidents. Regulated prevention of such accidents has therefore become more critical than when the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act was first passed.

On the other hand, the aspirations and political and social requirements of northern residents have become more complex and more important. Through this legislation, the minister is able both to manage the basic resources and to reconcile this objective with other orientations such as independent energy sources and the development of natural resources. The Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and his officials are now negotiating a variety of claims made by groups which represent the native people of Canada. Several of these claims concern the control of the territories now governed and regulated under the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act. For instance, the Inuit have always based the whole of their society and economy on the harvesting of wild life resources which depend directly or indirectly on the Arctic waters, and any regulation concerning these resources must