

Oral Questions

made by representatives of industry, governments and environmental groups.

When will the minister take his responsibility seriously? When will we have a national forestry data bank?

[English]

Hon. Frank Oberle (Minister of Forestry): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my hon. friend that the lack of factual and reliable data has been a major problem in the development of the kind of forestry practices that will take us into the next century and that will be required in the modern context. Despite that, my hon. friend knows that this year we will be planting 1.2 billion new seedlings in our country, which is at least double what we are harvesting, so we are on the right track. Improvements will be necessary as we go along and if we begin to incorporate the principle of sustainable development and integrated management into our management structures, my hon. friend will see a major improvement in all these areas.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Lynn Hunter (Saanich—Gulf Islands): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport, but in his absence I will address it to the parliamentary secretary.

It has been over a year since the *Exxon Valdez* and the *Nestucca* oil spills occurred. In the wake of these disasters, serious concerns were raised about the transport of oil through coastal waters. Report after report has stressed the lack of regulations with respect to oil barges, yet the government has failed to take action. Within a week, a barge carrying three million gallons of bunker oil is expected to travel through the Gulf Islands and into the waters of Saanich Inlet, an area proposed as a federal marine reserve park.

Given the regulatory vacuum with respect to oil barges, what assurances can the government give that this particular barge will not be permitted in these sensitive waters without the strictest supervision and with adequate provisions, in the event of an oil spill?

Mr. Ross Belsher (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the hon. member opposite that the Coast Guard is well aware that the proposed transportation has been designated to go forward and will be keeping everything under its

direct surveillance. I might remind the hon. member that the Coast Guard has been very active in dealing with this, in conjunction with the provincial authorities as well. I want to assure the hon. member that her concerns are being addressed.

Ms. Lynn Hunter (Saanich—Gulf Islands): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the minister. The interim report of the Brander-Smith inquiry released in September of 1989 stated that early action on the unregulated aspects of tanker barge construction and operation is required. That same report condemned the government's lack of readiness in the event of oil spills. When can we expect the government to enact regulations that would minimize the danger to the environment from fuel barging operations?

Mr. Ross Belsher (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, this is being actively looked at and the reports of the various committees which have reported are being dealt with, on a day-to-day basis.

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BILL C-21

Mr. Doug Fee (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration.

Bill C-21 is now back in the other place and we hope that, in the interests of Canadians, it will accept the message sent to it by this elected House. I know, for my part, in the legislative committee hearings on Bill C-21, that most negative witnesses were from union affiliated groups. These are the same groups that Liberal senators chose to hear, and the same groups they now lean on for support. I would like to ask the minister if she could inform the House if the views of these groups truly represent what the Canadian public feels about Bill C-21?

• (1450)

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, certainly I would never deny a committee of this House or of the other place its right to hear witnesses of its choosing.

I must admit I was surprised by some of the messages that were heard by the committee, given that we had conducted a poll, the results of which I released today, which showed that 66 per cent of Canadians in all regions of Canada support our efforts under Bill C-21 to