

From the very first day that the *Arrow* disaster occurred, I received literally an avalanche of letters, phone calls and other forms of communication, all purporting to have the total answer to the problem. The fact of the matter, as of course we can see now in retrospect and in particular on the basis of the excellent report of the McTaggart-Cowan task force, is that there is no simple or unique solution that can be applied everywhere oil spills occur. The circumstances will vary from one part of our coastline to another. They will vary substantially depending on the time of year at which an oil spill occurs, and they will vary, too, depending on the kind of oil that happens to be involved.

Of course, the circumstances in the Chedabucto Bay area were amongst the worst we are likely to encounter in that the incident occurred in February, in the dead of winter. Water temperatures were extremely cold. The oil involved was a very thick type, commonly called bunker C type oil. This combination of circumstances created what, I repeat, Mr. Speaker, must be among the worst circumstances we could have encountered.

As a result of that difficulty, I believe we have now devised within Canada a competence with regard to dealing with oil spills that is superior to that known to authorities in almost any other part of the world. One of the examples I may give in support of that contention is the fact that for the first time in the case of the *Arrow* disaster means were devised, again with the co-operation of our Armed Forces, through which it was possible to attach valves to the vessel under water, and pump the oil through quite an involved system of heating coils so that it could be brought up to a point where it would flow.

The whole story of the operation is one that I believe would impress hon. members both with the ingenuity, and in some respects the courage, of Canada's Armed Forces whose divers went down in that very murky, cold and difficult water to carry out the exercise. But at the moment the important point to emphasize is that, although we have that known competence now in the circumstances surrounding the *Arrow* disaster, I would not want to mislead the House into thinking that we know everything there is to know about how to deal with an oil spillage of major magnitude.

The one that occurred more recently in the gulf near Prince Edward Island was of a completely different nature, and therefore we had to apply different techniques in that case. Mercifully, I may say, the bad effects of that particular spill were kept to a minimum. However, this was due as much to the fact that it occurred in the summer and that we were able to employ different techniques, rather than to the fact that we know everything there is to know about clean-up operations. I want to make that clear for a reason that will become apparent in a few moments in more detail.

The real objective of this legislation is not to so much, as has been emphasized, to ensure that somebody else pays for the clean-up operation. The real objective of this legislation is to guarantee to the maximum degree possible, to the extent that it is humanly possible, that oil spills will not occur at all. That must be our objective.

Canada Shipping Act

Now, Mr. Speaker, although I was born and lived all my life with the sea at my doorstep, I was not what might be called an expert on marine law until I became involved in these rather difficult problems during the current year. However, I have been fascinated during the past several months to study the evolution of marine law, and some of the rather strange and wonderful involvements that there have been of various groups in determining how shipping is controlled, not only in Canada and Canadian waters but throughout the world.

I do not propose to subject hon. members to a lengthy history lesson, but I do want to mention the fact that for centuries the great bulk of marine law was designed to do one of two things, either to protect the shipping community in one way or another or to protect life at sea. Indeed, when one looks at the quite massive amount of legislation within our own country on this subject, it is apparent that through all the years the main concern of our legislators has been to ensure that seamen were given the maximum amount of protection. We have commendable success in that regard, particularly when one sees the conditions that exist on most vessels today and compares them with the circumstances that existed on vessels even 20 or 25 years ago. But the truth is that until comparatively recent times no thought was given to pollution and its effects in terms of ocean shipping.

I suppose that is only natural, when one considers that up until fairly recent times the size of vessels was somewhat limited and we did not have what constitutes the greatest menace of our day, these massive tankers which now ply the sea routes and, in many cases, move into and out of Canadian waters. So, this bill we are now proposing and commending to hon. members, is designed to give to the Canada Shipping Act what might be described as a new look. We are hoping that through this measure we will add this new dimension to marine law, and will ensure that the shipping community assumes a greater measure of responsibility for the potential hazards that are inherent in the movement of large quantities of various items, but particularly oil, which can be a potential threat to the environment.

• (12:10 p.m.)

Let me now return to what I mentioned a few moments ago as the main objective of this legislation. Hon. members, I hope, will feel free in the committee stage on the bill to examine it thoroughly. For that reason I shall not burden the House today with the specifics of what we intend to do. Rather I shall try, with a rather broad brush, to outline the general principles involved and then permit members during the committee stage on this bill to question not only expert witnesses but myself, if they so desire, concerning what the specifics are.

Essentially, in terms of the insurance, I can point out specifically that one of the things the commission investigating the *Arrow* disaster discovered was that this was, in every sense of the word, a tramp. This was a very badly constructed ancient vessel which had not been kept