

With all this pious nonsense about greater technology, greater ability, greater surveillance, the fact is that I spoke to Mr. Smiley in Washington, D.C., the Exxon spokesperson on this particular spill, and I asked him what can be done. He said it is too late to burn it, it is too late for chemicals, it is out of control and we cannot do anything more than we are doing now. So what is this stuff from the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Siddon) and the Minister of Transport (Mr. Bouchard) saying we have 24 depots with generators sitting there and we have straw and we have these winches and we have all this stuff ready to go? It is pious nonsense.

It would have been better for the Canadian people to hear the Minister and a government spokesman say, "Look, it is a disaster, we are incapable of dealing with it and we are committed openly to having a public inquiry, not just on the West coast spill, an opportunity we have lost, but a public, open inquiry right now in front of all Canadians so that step by step we can find out what went wrong and do everything humanly possible to see that it does not happen again."

I would expect to see this Government immediately launch criminal proceedings in the United States against the perpetrators of the spill in Washington State that damaged the West coast of British Columbia, immediate legal proceedings. I would expect that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lewis), who is concerned with protecting the Canadian people, will announce that if one square inch of Canadian territory is affected by one oil blob, there will be legal suit against Exxon and those perpetrators of this oil spill.

It is not enough to talk about sending 15 otters down to the aquarium in Vancouver as some kind of humanitarian gesture. I can see all the Ministers going out to Vancouver now for photo opportunities, rolling up their sleeves and scrubbing a little otter, saying, "This is my share of cleaning up this mess." I do not want to make light of the damage to the otters, but that is hardly worthy of a Government whom we expect to protect the environment.

Mr. Smiley, the Exxon co-ordinator of spill management, also acknowledged that, to his knowledge, at no time has the Canadian Government invoked its part of the joint treaty on this current spill and asked that it be not only just an observer there but that every piece of equipment that it claims it has be on site and helping. They have never even asked for that and yet it is part of the agreement.

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This emergency debate is important, not only because of the oil spill. It is important for the Canadian people to understand that the same falsehoods told to the Canadian people during the election campaign only to be ignored after the Government's re-election show the same pattern of behaviour on the part of this Government when it comes to the pronouncements it has made on the environment.

Was it four months ago or six months ago that we heard those pious statements, "Vote for me and I will be angelic. Vote for me and I will do all of these wonderful things"? The newspapers coming out lately are saying, "Oh, well, we have to scrub all that stuff we promised. We did not tell you the truth then, there will be tough times now." I approve of tough times. Let us get tough with the oil companies, not with the people of British Columbia.

No one has a monopoly on what is good or what is decent. No one expects the Government to be responsible for everything. The Opposition's responsibility is, of course, to attack the Government. We are not blaming the Government for the oil spill, but we have every right to condemn the Minister for the inaction after the oil spill took place.

What is the alternative plan of the Government to appeal to the Americans to avoid these spills? Will it demand that the International Court at The Hague provide that no tanker leaving any port anywhere in the world will ever leave again without a certified pilot at the wheel and that it would be criminally responsible of the owner of the tanker if one did? Would they be prepared to go to the court at The Hague and assure us that when every tanker comes back into Canadian waters, there is a pilot on board?

Many Hon. Members here do not know beautiful British Columbia. They think it is some distance away and that it is such a vast coast that nothing could hurt the area. My good friend, the Hon. Member from Hamilton, talked about this happening in Toronto or in the Seaway. Let me ask this rhetorical question, Mr. Speaker. What if it happens at Cherry Point 30 miles south of Vancouver in the Strait of Georgia out of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, a contained oil spill that would destroy fisheries, feed stock, herring and the fry coming down from major river estuaries to feed our commercial salmon industry? I do not have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, what a disaster that would be, but that is where the next spill will happen, and it has already happened there once. We had high school youngsters on the American side of the border cleaning up that spill a few years ago.