

BP oil spill fuels drilling debate in Parliament

OIL CONTINUED FROM P1

NDP leader Jack Layton and others hounded the government over potential changes to the safety standards that they allege could weaken environmental protection, a charge the government says is unfounded.

"Some companies are asking the National Energy Board to postpone its review of safety standards. These companies want more lenient safety requirements. That would be disastrous. Why has the government left the door to this disastrous possibility open?" asked Layton.

John Baird, Minister of Transport, said the government will make no changes that could risk environmental contamination.

"We have strong environmental laws to protect our air, water, and soil. The National Energy Board and this government would only allow any resource extraction projects to go forward if there were strong environmental protections," he said.

"I want to indicate very directly for the leader of the NDP that this government has no plans and no intention to reduce the environmental standards in this regard."

Layton said plans to change the jurisdiction of environmental assessments currently being carried out by the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency could weaken environmental protection, a charge Baird denied.

Questions continued with Liberal MP Ujjal Dosanjh accusing the government of planning to raise the moratorium on tanker traffic and drilling off the coast of British Columbia.

"The member for Vancouver South [Dosanjh] should know that the government has no intention

of revisiting this issue," responded Baird.

Layton told reporters on Wednesday that he also had concerns over this issue because of comments from B.C. Premier Gordon Campbell, who Layton says wants to lift the moratorium.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who faced similar questions on Monday, said the situation in the Gulf of Mexico "truly is horrific."

"It is an environmental catastrophe unlike anything we have seen in quite a long time. The behaviour of the companies in question is completely unacceptable and would be completely unacceptable in this country."

Layton asked the Prime Minister about a potential BP oil rig in the Beaufort Sea. BP operates the rig that is leaking thousands of barrels of oil into the Gulf of Mexico.

"BP failed to prevent the worst ecological disaster we have seen since the Exxon Valdez and now it wants to have its way with our Arctic," he said.

"Will the Prime Minister state clearly here today that there will be no weakening of the environmental standards as requested by BP?"

Harper answered that since coming to office, the government has toughened environmental enforcement in the Arctic.

"We will do no such thing in terms of weakening environmental standards," he said.

"As we have said before, the National Energy Board is clear. There is no drilling unless the environment is protected and unless workers are protected. That is the bottom line, and this government will not tolerate the kind of situation we see in the Gulf of Mexico."



L-R: Clive Ansley, MP Scott Reid, David Kilgour, and Lizhi He spoke at a lunch forum on Parliament Hill Wednesday that explored the status of the Chinese judicial system. MATTHEW LITTLE/THE EPOCH TIMES

MPs hear the plight of Chinese lawyers

By MATTHEW LITTLE
Epoch Times Staff

PARLIAMENT HILL, Ottawa—Lizhi He was an engineer in China who was sent to jail in 2000 for three-and-a-half years just before emigrating to Canada because of letters he wrote to friends that were intercepted by the Chinese regime.

His letters contradicted the state line on Falun Gong, a meditation practice he says helped him recover his health.

"The practice was demonized day and night by the state propaganda media. ... I felt it my responsibility to tell my friends the truth before I left China."

When he tried to hire a lawyer he found only one that was willing to take his case, but that didn't last long. "On the second visit, this lawyer told my wife that his license to practice law was revoked."

Like many others, the lawyer was punished for his previous

defense of another Falun Gong practitioner.

Mr. He shared his story at a lunch forum organized by Conservative MP Scott Reid (and supported by MPs from all parties) on Parliament Hill on Wednesday that analyzed the status of the Chinese judicial system.

Clive Ansley, one of the speakers to address the packed room, was among the first Canadians to practice law in China and represented foreign firms there for 14 years. He said the reports that come back from Canadian officials touring Chinese courts and declaring how far the Chinese judicial system has progressed are completely off-base.

He recounted the tale of a judge who visited China and came back to tell 300 trial lawyers that the Chinese judicial system was "so far ahead of us that we will never catch up" because the courthouse he visited was decked out in a mountain of marble and featured plasma televisions.

What the judge had failed to recognize, said Ansley, is that in that courtroom decisions on cases are made by political authorities rather than judges, and that despite the reams of new laws being written by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), no law stands above the regime or can be used to hold government authorities to account.

Ansley said anyone relying on these wine-and-dined "banquet visitors" for a fair appraisal of the Chinese judiciary will be ill-served because such people see the form of the courts but not the function.

"They are just totally and utterly divorced from reality, he said." A clear example, he added, can be found in the fact that China's current Chief Justice does not have a law degree and has no legal training, but has risen to his position because he advocates a legal philosophy that directs the courts to first be loyal to the CCP, then to the Chinese people (according

to what the Party says they need), and lastly, the law.

Lawyers who try to challenge the directives of the Party according to the law face imprisonment themselves, he said.

"Lawyers are being imprisoned today on totally bogus charges." Like the lawyer Mr. He tried to hire, lawyers in China are not supposed to represent anyone targeted by the regime, nor bring cases that can embarrass authorities.

As the China monitor for Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada, a group that advocates for lawyers and the rule of law by trying to protect lawyers, Ansley said he is flooded with appeals from Chinese lawyers facing severe punishments that can arise for anything from representing Christians to sticking up for farmers whose land was seized for development by local authorities.

"We are inundated with them, there isn't a week that goes by that there isn't another appeal," he said.

Netherlands knights Canadian military historian

By HELENA ZHU
Epoch Times Staff

As Canada and its Second World War allies prepare to celebrate the 65th Anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) Day on May 8, the Netherlands is honouring a Canadian military historian with a knighthood.

Dr. Dean Oliver, director of research and exhibitions at the Canadian War Museum, has received the Dutch honour, Knight in the Order of Orange-Nassau.

"The pivotal role Canadian soldiers have played in liberating our country has given Canada and the Netherlands a shared military history."

— His Excellency
Wim J.P. Geerts

The esteemed decoration is bestowed by Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands on Dutch citizens and foreign nationals who have performed outstanding service to society. The title

bears the hyphenated name used by the Royal Family of the Netherlands since the 16th century.

A noted historian of the Second World War, Oliver has played a prominent role in commemorating Canada's involvement in the Liberation of the Netherlands, one of the most celebrated events in Holland. It is also one of the proudest moments in the annals of Canada's military.

Oliver has also worked to build and sustain a strong connection between the museum and Canada's Dutch community.

"The pivotal role Canadian soldiers have played in liberating our country has given Canada and the Netherlands a shared military history. This shared history is highly visible in the Canadian War Museum." His Excellency Wim J.P. Geerts, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Canada, said in a statement.

"Dr. Oliver is the primary creator of the War Museum's new historical exhibits on the 1939-1945 war. That the exhibits in the new building give appropriate attention to the Canadian role in the Liberation of the Netherlands is largely thanks to him. For this, Dr. Oliver has earned the respect of Canada's Dutch community."

A respected scholar and museologist, the historian is known for his leadership in developing the museum's Canadian Experience Galleries, a per-

manent exhibition of the human experience of war and its effect on communities and individuals. He also played a significant role in developing Forged in Fire, a Second World War gallery, and its major exhibits devoted to the Liberation of the Netherlands.

The Canadian War Museum tells the story of the liberation and the sacrifice of the Canadian soldiers who fought in the difficult conditions of the Low Countries in 1944 and 1945. It summarizes the liberation and Canada's role in providing aid and medical help to the Dutch people who had suffered widespread hunger and hardship under the German occupiers.

It concludes by focusing on the Dutch Royal Family's wartime refuge in Canada and presenting a reminder of the special relationship between the two countries that continues today.

In the approach to VE Day, the Dutch are preparing to welcome Canadian veterans back to the Netherlands to celebrate both the VE Day and the Liberation of the Netherlands. VE Day events will be held in Ottawa on May 8 at the National War Memorial as well as in other cities and towns across the country.

More than a million Canadians contributed to defeating the Axis in the Second World War. As of March 2009, about 163,450 Canadian WW II veterans are still alive with an average age of 86.

One in five Canadians has pondered, attempted suicide: Survey

SUICIDE CONTINUED FROM P1

"We know that one in five youth has a diagnosable mental illness, we know that 80 percent of kids incarcerated in the youth justice system have mental illness, and we know that the leading cause of death after accidents—for teenagers—is suicide," Moore says.

The Kinark poll also found that a full 99 percent of the 1,000 respondents view mental health as important as physical health.

"We did a study a couple of years ago and we found that half of mothers and two-thirds of fathers would be ashamed to admit that their child had attempted suicide."

— Peter Moore

However, the emphasis on physical well-being surpasses the support provided to those suffering from mental illness. According to Kinark, children diagnosed with broken bones or juvenile diabetes get same-day treatment—while it can take weeks or months for a child with bi-polar disorder to receive treatment.

In addition, the stigma long associated with mental health disorders is still alive and well, says Moore, with parents' reluctance to acknowledge that their child may have a problem preventing them from seeking help.

"We did a study a couple of years ago and we found that half of mothers and two-thirds of fathers would be ashamed to admit that their child had attempted suicide," he says.

"I think truly parents know that the behaviour isn't quite what it should be with their kids, but they're really, really hoping that it's not true and wanting it not to be true and avoiding



One in five Canadians has considered or attempted suicide, a poll has found, with the same number of children and youth suffering from a diagnosable mental illness. PHOTOS.COM

the situation, because they are ashamed."

Until recently, Quebec held the unenviable top spot for suicides in the industrial world, but interventions are now beginning to show results.

Suicide prevention programs in high schools, a province-wide 24-hour suicide help line, and suicide training workshops have helped, as have two research centres.

Despite marked improvements, however, suicide remains the leading cause of death among young men in Quebec.

"Even if things are getting better, Quebec still has one of the highest suicide rates in the

world," Michel Presseault, co-ordinator of Suicide Action Montreal, told the Montreal Gazette.

"We still get about 20,000 calls a year," he said. "So even if the suicide rate is down, there are still many people in Quebec with severe depression who need help."

With depression affecting increasingly younger people, Moore says it's crucial to address mental health problems before they become a diagnosable illness.

"There's so much going on in our world, and so much media, so much the kids are confronted with, that we really need to pay attention to mental well-being and mental health."

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