

Supply—Transport

recognizing the necessity of maintaining ship repair facilities and drydock facilities both on the west coast and the east coast and in certain areas of the great lakes. I think that is a sound policy to follow. We must maintain these facilities and they cannot be maintained on repair work alone. I would therefore think that the principle of tender by area might well be considered even when there are not a number of vessels to be built.

But that procedure still will not solve the problem of just having too many yards. I wonder whether the minister might consider a suggestion that the Canadian maritime commission might review this problem with the idea of coming up with some plan for, let us say, the replacement of our rather considerable great lakes tonnage which is rapidly growing old, and which includes perhaps not the most efficient carriers in the world, and whereby some concessions similar to concessions made by other countries might be made so that a replacement program for these great lakes vessels might take place. This would relieve the pressures on the minister and on the government with regard to work for the great lakes yards and would then leave a problem mainly for the east and west coasts.

Further, the hon. member mentioned productivity. He was quite fair in pointing out the high labour rates that are paid on the west coast but as an offsetting factor there is a higher productivity figure. Not only were the number of man-hours lower on the last destroyer escort vessel than on any other destroyer escort vessel built in any other area in Canada but I have been informed that the actual cost in dollars and cents was among the lowest and stood up very closely with the best area. In fact, I was told that it was the lowest cost in dollars of the last few destroyer escorts. I cannot vouch for that fact; it is just what I was told.

I think the minister might also consider fire prevention, particularly in the port of Vancouver with the tremendous facilities and the high dollar value involved in the holdings of the national harbours board in that port. Through the national harbours board or through his own department some consideration might be given to underwriting some of the financial costs of this service which is being provided by the city alone, as far as I know, at the present time.

Mr. Winch: On the same point, if I may I should like to say a few words. I am grateful to the hon. member for Vancouver South for having brought us back to Vancouver which is wonderful. However, may I just conclude in this way by talking through you, Mr. Chairman, to the minister? In this last

half hour I have been careful in analysing the remarks made or the answers given by the minister to the questions which I raised. It is now apparent to me that there is a differentiation between the policy of the Department of Defence Production and that of his own department in the allocation of contracts for construction or repair of ships, or mostly construction. As I mentioned, from all the information I received as a member of the House of Commons it appears that the Department of Defence Production, through or on behalf of the Department of National Defence, recognizes the essentiality of having a shipbuilding industry in Canada both on the Atlantic and the Pacific coasts.

I understand from the answers of the minister, which have been confirmed by the previous speaker and also by the city of Vancouver, that the policy of the Department of Transport is to allocate contracts on a reasonable basis to the lowest tender. There is a great deal to be said for that argument, but from my own point of view I would like to say that additional consideration should be given to the maintenance of the shipyards on the Pacific coast.

I have no hesitation in saying that it would be a calamity if the shipbuilding industry and repair facilities on the British Columbia coast were allowed to die. The previous speaker said I was fair in giving an analysis of the costs, and I quoted a most lengthy communication I have had from the shipbuilding industry in British Columbia. They find that as a rule they are somewhere in the neighbourhood of between 12 per cent and 20 per cent higher on a competitive tender.

What I have in mind in rising again is to say this. For the general good of Canada this government sees fit to grant subventions to the coal industry in the maritimes, and I am not raising objection to that. This government sees fit to give assistance to the gold mines of Canada, and I am not objecting to that. This government sees fit to grant aid running into millions to certain branches of agriculture, and I have never voted against that yet and I do not intend to. I contend that the maintenance of the shipbuilding industry of British Columbia is for the general welfare and good of Canada.

Because of certain circumstances whereby our shipbuilding companies in Victoria and Vancouver run approximately a minimum of 12 per cent higher, the policy of the government and of the minister's department should be to see that that shipbuilding industry is maintained. I hope that any work which may be undertaken while the present minister is in office will be undertaken not only in light of that fact but that through his department