

Supply

more for what they would get in the end than what they would pay for another alternative.

I also raised the possibility of a report along those lines with the Premier of Nova Scotia last week. He did not indicate at that time the feelings which he seems to have indicated in the CP story. I will certainly be happy to meet with him if he comes to Ottawa next week. I want to tell him he should realize, however, that such a project does not affect only Nova Scotia, that there are two other maritime provinces involved.

There have been some views expressed by the government of New Brunswick. I have noticed, even in Nova Scotia, that there are people who are concerned that the development which takes place be good for the consumers and workers of that province, and not just a project imposed upon the maritime provinces. I noticed, for instance, that the steel workers in Cape Breton, showed their support today for the position of the federal government by saying in effect that the Nova Scotia government should bear in mind the interests of the workers, the advisability of further coal development, and a careful examination of all the alternatives. They also said that careful attention should be given to the possibility of a substantial gas find off Sable Island.

• (2100)

As I said, this government still believes that the construction of the pipeline to the maritimes is a project that should receive priority consideration. I hope that the Q and M Corporation is going to proceed with the work that is required from it in the environmental field and that we will also be able to have further information as soon as possible concerning the possible discoveries of natural gas off Sable Island. It is our intention to try to develop ways and means to speed up explorations in this area and to try to get the relative information at the earliest possible moment, after which I hope we will get a positive report from the National Energy Board.

I hope these few comments will answer the points raised by the hon. member. I shall not comment further on the more histrionic part of the statement by the premier of her province at this time.

Mr. Skelly: Mr. Chairman, my comments tonight are again directed to the Minister of Transport. I have to say that I enjoyed some of the very humorous remarks this evening and the sort of soft shoe approach. I admit that I got lost in the fog along with the Canadian merchant fleet.

I should like to return to the topic of search and rescue on the west coast and the department's role in that particular endeavour.

An hon. Member: Two rowboats!

Mr. Skelly: Before doing that I should like to go back to an incident that occurred off the east coast of Newfoundland where 13 Dutch seamen drowned from the Dutch ship, *The Gabriella*. I would remind the minister that as the result of the tragic death of those 13 people, his government built a search and rescue base and equipped it with three helicopters. They

also took some action to rationalize search and rescue in Canada. There were attempts to co-ordinate the S and R committee and things along that line.

I should like to refer to another incident which took place on the west coast of Canada in British Columbia and compare it with the incident in Newfoundland. In the two weeks over the Christmas period in 1979, just a few months ago, 42 people died as a result of the sinking of a Panamanian freighter, a fishing vessel, and a few other incidents.

One of the things that came out of this, which matches the event in Newfoundland, was the complete failure of government capability to provide a rescue platform into the area. Again, figures become a problem but, as I recall, the distress call came in about 9 in the morning. They managed to get one of the helicopters of the Department of Transport to the site at 1.15. The problem was that, after four hours in the water, any who survived the sinking were dead from exposure. The sinking of the vessel, the *Lee Wan Zing*, was a tragic event. From anything that people in British Columbia can determine, the department has done absolutely nothing about this; it has sat on the case for four months. I believe the Department of National Defence has taken what appears to be some concrete action by cutting back the search and rescue helicopter upgrading program. The minister had the courage the other day to say it was adequate and even improving!

I should like to ask the minister one very simple question. As Minister of Transport can he assure the House that the government has done nothing, or the fact that the government has done nothing about those 42 deaths has nothing to do with the fact that those people were Taiwanese seamen and Canadian Indians? Can the minister give the House the assurance that the government has done nothing and it is related to that fact?

Mr. Pepin: Mr. Chairman, my hon. friend seems to be in a pugnacious mood—"said nothing," "done nothing," and what not. I just want to repeat what I heard this morning, that the search and rescue facility is a major preoccupation of the Department of Transport and it is still a major one for the Department of National Defence. As my hon. friend knows, the first responsibility is theirs. We support that effort to the best of our capabilities.

I do not think he should emphasize so strongly that nothing is being done. As a matter of fact, in the present estimates nine vessels are being added to the search and rescue support facilities, one of them in Campbell River, B.C., a crash boat in the west Strait of Georgia, B.C., and one of them at Prince Rupert, so the effort is expanding. In a nutshell, we do the best we can with what we have, and what we have is improving. Canada is tremendously—

An hon. Member: There is money for fighter planes.

Mr. Pepin: If ever they need to use those planes, the very people who say we do not need them now would be hiding somewhere. The situation is improving and the estimates tonight demonstrate that. We are trying to improve our rela-