

which are 10,000-ton dry cargo vessels: east coast, ninety-nine, made up of twenty-six 4,700-ton dry cargo vessels, five 3,600-ton tankers, 12 10,000-ton tankers, and fifty-six 10,000-ton dry cargo vessels. In addition, the Department of Munitions built another series of ships known as Fort vessels for the British government under lend-lease. They were returnable to Canada after the end of the war with Japan, after V-J day, and fourteen of them have been returned. We had no use for them here, and those fourteen were sold. They were not fourteen of the 4,700-ton ships; they were from the Fort fleet, not from the Park fleet. We have, however, sold five of the 3,600-ton tankers. We could find no charterer for them. They were declared surplus to requirements and sold.

Mr. COCKERAM: For how much?

Mr. HOWE: For \$350,000 each.

Mr. HOMUTH: What was the cost of producing them?

Mr. HOWE: I cannot say. I shall be glad to give that information to the committee, or I can give it when War Assets affairs are being discussed here. I have not the information. The sale of ships is a matter for War Assets. Have I answered the questions of the hon. member for Vancouver East?

Mr. MacINNIS: This, I understand, is a crown company.

Mr. HOWE: Yes.

Mr. MacINNIS: What is it intended to do in the days ahead? Is the crown company to be continued, or is it the intention to sell the ships if buyers can be found?

Mr. HOWE: The present practice is that the ships are owned by a crown company and operated for government account by certain private operators. The contract is entered into with a private ship operator, under which he performs certain services in connection with the voyage and for which he is paid a fee. The results of the voyage are for government account. That worked very well in war time when the government provided practically all the cargo, but it is not workable in peace time when the finding of cargoes becomes a highly competitive matter. That was amply demonstrated after the last war when the government attempted to operate a much smaller fleet. An effort will be made to sell these ships for operation under the Canadian flag. An offer has been made to the operators at present operating the ships for the purchase by them of the ships, and later on I

shall be glad to give my hon. friend the particulars of that offer. It is on a par with the offer made by the United States government to the operators there and by the British government to British operators. As many ships will be sold to private Canadian operators as possible, and the probabilities are that, if we still have a surplus of ships, it may be necessary to tie them up.

Mr. PROBE: May I ask the minister a number of questions dealing with the operation of Park Steamship Company Limited? In extension of the questions asked in part by the member for Vancouver East (Mr. MacInnis), these questions may be answered at a later date if he has not the information available now, but I have tabulated those that I should like to have answered. First, how many ships does the Park Steamship company own at the present time?

Mr. HOWE: I have just given that figure.

Mr. PROBE: The 154 represents the present holding? What is the present value? How many have been sold and to whom, at what price and at what fraction of the cost? Then, with respect to the operating profit, in spite of the rather involved manner in which the Park Steamship company has been operating, in which you have leased these vessels, or something of the sort, to private operators, I notice by the statement of the 1944 accounts that the net profit for the year ended March 31, 1944, of the Park Steamship company was \$9,020,000 odd. What is the operating profit to March 31, 1945? The figure which is shown in the public accounts for the operation in 1944 of Park Steamship company represents a rather reasonable public enterprise effort in spite of its limitations, by subletting every possible feature of it. The minister expressed doubts that this group of vessels could be indefinitely operated by the government itself, and doubts as well that he might be able to sell or dispose of the vessels. What would be his reaction to turning this fleet into the Hudson bay route for use as an experimental fleet of vessels to carry traffic from Churchill to foreign markets and return cargoes, operating it as a government experiment pending the establishment of a private line, since the policy of the government is opposed to the handling of transport as a government enterprise? Possibly he could answer that last question now and we could have the other answers tabled later.

Mr. HOWE: I would be in favour of using some of these ships on the Hudson bay route, but I would remind my hon. friend