

Maritime Code Act and the Oil and Gas Production and Conservation Act in consequence thereof.—(*Honourable Senator Kenny*).

Hon. Colin Kenny: Honourable senators, my concern with the proposed amendments to the Canada Shipping Act relates to the legal requirement to have masters present on offshore drilling rigs when they are drilling. The previous act and the earlier proposed Bill C-75 specifically excluded offshore drilling rigs from the requirement of having masters on board and in charge. The situation at present is unsatisfactory inasmuch as offshore drilling rigs are required by law to have masters on board only when in transit to and from the drilling site and not when they are operating. In light of the "Ocean Ranger" disaster, this would appear to be a significant oversight. However, after making inquiries with the industry, I gather that there are informal guidelines in place, without the force of law, which require masters to be on board and in charge at all times, and that this has become standard industry practice. Further inquiries with COGLA and with the Ministry of Transport have reassured me that the current guidelines will be incorporated into regulations under the proposed act once it is passed. If this is the case, I would be in favour of the proposed legislation being referred to committee as soon as it is convenient.

Hon. C. William Doody (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, in the absence of Senator Finlay MacDonald, I would like to say that the points raised by Senator Kenny are worthy of consideration. I agree that it might be appropriate to refer the bill to the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications.

With that understanding, on behalf of Senator MacDonald, I move second reading.

Motion agreed to and bill read second time.

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, when shall this bill be read the third time?

On motion of Senator Doody, bill referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications.

TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS

UNION OR ASSOCIATION WITH CANADA—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Hazen Argue rose, pursuant to notice of Tuesday, March 10, 1987:

That he will call the attention of the Senate to the desirability and advantages of the Turks and Caicos Islands becoming a part of Canada; the support for such action among Turks and Caicos Islanders and Canadians; and whether any of the following steps might be usefully taken prior to a formal union or association:—

- (1) adoption of a common currency;
- (2) designation of Canada's Governor General as the Queen's representative for the Islands;

(3) a closer economic association between the two countries;

(4) any change in procedures to our mutual advantage that would assist the entry of Canadians to the Islands, and of Islanders to Canada; and

(5) provision of efficient direct air service between the two countries.

He said: Honourable senators, I am pleased to speak to this inquiry that stands in my name. I think it is important. I think it is far reaching. I think it is constructive, and I think it holds great promise for an initiative that would be to the advantage of some 8,000 or so citizens of the Turks and Caicos Islands and to some 26 million Canadians. I was honoured to receive an indication from Senator Macquarrie that he is prepared to second this motion, if I may put it that way, and to support the inquiry. When the appropriate time comes, I expect that a motion will be made referring this matter to committee, presumably the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Senator Doody: Let's do it by a Committee of the Whole, and we can all go down there!

Senator Argue: I think we will get general support whether it is done by one method or another. I guess Committee of the Whole would be fine. We could bring in all kinds of witnesses. It might have the greatest amount of support in the Committee of the Whole that we have ever seen, because sometimes in the Committee of the Whole there is not exactly complete agreement on both sides.

● (1530)

I put this inquiry forward believing that it is an important question that goes far beyond partisan politics. Gaining the support of Senator Macquarrie—and he has been a veteran in supporting this question—indicates to me that in the Senate it will have support—and I hope unanimous support—from members of both parties in the Senate, Conservative and Liberal, and also from those who list themselves as independent. Also, the history of the discussion of this idea suggests that the New Democratic Party is likely to give it support, and, therefore, I think it bodes well if the whole issue is handled carefully and with great sensitivity, and that the interests, above all, of the Turks and Caicos Islanders are given the first and most important consideration.

This initiative on my part in dealing with this subject is not new. I became interested in this question approximately 14 years ago, and I think the same can be said for Senator Macquarrie. Senator Macquarrie brings to this subject experience in international questions and international affairs. He also brings to bear on this subject an inquiring and academic mind. Over the years Senator Macquarrie has built for himself an extensive reputation as a Canadian who can look at international questions in an objective and constructive manner and come forward with ideas and proposals that are helpful to the international community. Therefore, I anticipate with pleasure the remarks that Senator Macquarrie will make on this subject, whenever he feels that he can participate in this debate.