

Supply—Transport

It appears to me that if we analyse the reversal of policy which the hon. member and other members of that group have followed, that is where you can really see the political interests.

What is happening now is rather extraordinary. The provincial government of Quebec is now helping the federal government to assume its responsibilities in the matter of shipping and navigation on the St. Lawrence river. I am rather anxious to hear some of the hon. members opposite try to explain why so many accusations were made in 1951, and why the government of the province of Quebec now proposes to assume a responsibility which definitely comes within the field of the federal government.

Mr. Hees: In answer to the hon. member's question I would like to point out to him that this government controls and regulates shipping. We are required to regulate but not to operate shipping. Any private company can operate an icebreaker in our navigable waters, and many private companies do so. May I cite two examples which come to mind; the paper company at Bathurst, New Brunswick, and the Canada Steamship Lines at Midland. Other companies also operate icebreakers. There is no objection to any company operating an icebreaker or to a provincial government operating an icebreaker.

Mr. Chairman, I find it very hard to understand the hon. member's objection to a very progressive and constructive step which has been proposed by the premier of Quebec to assist shipping—

Mr. Cardin: And to assume federal responsibilities.

Mr. Hees: It is not a federal responsibility at all. It is a responsibility which can be assumed by the federal government, a provincial government or a private company, and as I have stated many private companies do this kind of work for themselves. What the hon. member is trying to do, as I see it, is to object to progress being made by the very progressive government in Quebec headed by Premier Barrette, who I believe has made a very progressive suggestion indeed. I find it hard to understand why the hon. member objects to this very progressive suggestion and policy which would assist shipping in his own province.

Mr. Cardin: The minister cannot take objection to any words of mine so far. What I have been trying to bring out is the fact that the government, and particularly those members from the province of Quebec, had a

completely different idea of what the constitution meant in 1951, and it is a complete reversal of policy.

Mr. Hees: Mr. Chairman, all I can say is that if the province of Quebec wishes to operate icebreakers it has a perfect right to do so, and it is a further example of the very progressive attitude adopted by that very progressive government.

Mr. Deschatelets: If I can follow up the remarks of the hon. members for Richelieu-Vercheres, I would like to ask a question of the minister. If navigation on the St. Lawrence river in Quebec is kept open by icebreakers owned by the Quebec government, can the minister say whether in such case the federal government would maintain the buoys and other facilities relating to navigation, and also say which government would bear responsibility in case of damage?

Mr. Hees: I would like to point out to the hon. member that we do now maintain buoys for winter coastal shipping. If navigation is to be extended in any area of Canada, why naturally we would be very glad to look into the whole situation and carry out the same progressive policy that we have maintained over the past three years in this and other fields.

Mr. Howard: I would like to add a word or two to what the hon. member for Port Arthur said about the annual report of the Department of Transport. I know there are agencies under the department, such as the Canadian maritime commission, which make their own annual reports which go into quite some detail, and I am sure that what the minister has said about this is quite true. It has always been the case that any member of parliament who may want to inquire in the most extreme detail into activities within a department may do so, but the circulation of the report of the Department of Transport is confined to members of parliament. Other people may obtain the report from libraries, and it is referred to quite regularly by interested people. It would seem to me that some expansion of detail and explanation of the activities of the department in its annual report would be beneficial.

The minister said, as I understood it, that there were in the past extensive departmental reports but that representations were made to the effect that these should be curtailed, and that there should not be so much detail and volume to the reports. As a consequence this report was cut down to the information contained in it at the moment.

Mr. Chairman, I would submit that there should be quite a bit of expansion of the detail in the departmental report, and I hope