

the Harbour Commissions Act, without disturbing the operation or administration of the existing harbour commissions. On the recommendation of the National Ports Council, a review of the organization of Canada's ports and harbours will be undertaken.

At its last meeting, the council also considered the question of competition between ports, particularly vis-à-vis Canadian and United States ports, and some time was also devoted to the problems arising out of the evaluation of tankers and bulk carrier vessels of increasing size which the majority of the traditional, multipurpose ports in the world are unable to handle. It was recognized that the challenges facing Canada to develop deep water port facilities at suitable sites are complex and will require farsighted planning to meet our country's future needs.

The third meeting of the National Ports Council was held on October 10. At that meeting, position papers were submitted by the harbour commissions and by the National Harbours Board local port authorities setting forth their views on a format for a harbours administration structure for Canada at the local, regional and national levels. Provincial representatives have been asked to submit their views also, and it is our intention to seek a melting of the various views into the position which was announced last spring after the second meeting.

● (1740)

Mr. S. Victor Railton (Welland): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to take part in this discussion on harbours. I live in Port Colborne, a harbour of considerable importance, with many varied and difficult problems to settle. This has given me some insight into harbour problems in general. As a member of the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications I have become even more interested in problems with regard to water transportation.

When this bill was introduced it was suggested that local people should be elected to harbour commissions. On superficial examination this seems to be an excellent idea. Who other than local people who are interested in the growth and smooth working of their port facilities would be better able to look after the interests of a port? However, as I said, this opinion is arrived at only after very superficial examination.

The hon. member for London East (Mr. Turner) presented a very good breakdown of the present method of administering ports and harbours. I think my remarks will be of help to the hon. member who introduced the bill. There are many large harbour commissions which have local interests at heart, such as those in coastal cities and cities such as Toronto and Hamilton on inland waters. They have done a great deal for their local areas. Harbours of that type have not really contravened any of the overall regulations, so there is no reason why they should not continue hand in hand with the federal administration.

The hon. member who introduced the bill expressed fears about pollution of the environment. Naturally, members from British Columbia are worried about oil pollution. Oil pollution is a great menace to water, beaches, fish, fowl and persons who live along the shores. There is also a human danger. The problem of oil pollution could not be settled by a local administrative body. It is international in scope. There must be worldwide conferences on

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how to handle the problem. Yesterday we had a discussion about territorial waters. This has a large bearing on the oil pollution problem. The Minister of the Environment (Mr. Davis) has spoken about this problem many times in the House. He hails from British Columbia and is familiar with this problem, as well as the problem of sea transportation from Alaska to Seattle. I do not think local bodies would have any effect on the question of oil pollution.

There is no reason why we should not have local representation in this regard. As the hon. member for London East pointed out, these bodies have local appointees with no function except to look after the interest of their local area. They have a great deal of time and are not torn by political considerations. They are not political appointments. They are not even representatives of the municipalities or regions. For these reasons I think such appointments are good.

The member who introduced this bill expressed concern worried about small ports. As has already been mentioned, there are hundreds of these. Some are not much more than marinas which have been built by private interests. Private ports of that kind in Ontario involve a great deal of regulation. Just like someone buying land where there is a beautiful beach, in order to create a private, money-making marina type of operation, private ports sometimes become an environmental hazard to residents of the area. The same thing could happen with private marinas. For that reason, a local group would not be sufficient.

Larger harbours which involve fishing, protection from storms, coastal and pleasure craft, should be treated uniformly across Canada. For example, we have had a great deal of discussion in committee about the ports in Newfoundland and other areas in the east. Fishing ports require upkeep. This involves more than could be handled by a local municipality. They have to be under the supervision of the federal government. To pass enough money around to satisfy all local needs would be very difficult. No matter how much they scream, the available money has to be divided equally.

This is the case in Port Colborne, and even in Welland. We have a nine-mile bypass which has been a great boon to shipping. The curving of the narrow channel in the city of Welland was eliminated. If we in Port Colborne and Welland had everything we have asked for, we would be another Montreal or Toronto. Although it would be very desirable from a local standpoint, it is impossible to squeeze that much money out of the government. I say that even though I am a member of this government. I have spent a great time trying to persuade the Department of Transport and the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority to find the money to do what we think should be done to improve our environment and beautify the old canal.

The National Harbours Board is a very worthwhile institution. It functions in the area of grain transportation both by rail to port terminals and by transshipment. This must be a federal matter mainly, again, because of the financial aspects involved. However, I invite hon. members to look at the broader aspects of water transportation in this country, forgetting for a moment about the small ports and I do not mean that unkindly.