

in the Department of Public Works, and the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce are all supportive of it. Every civil servant I have spoken to supports it. If it does not go ahead it will only be because of political interference of the most demeaning type.

If I am ever in a position again to represent my province in the Government of Canada, I hope that I will never stoop so low as to try to stop a project in another member's district that is so deserving—or even undeserving—after it has been started and is on its way. I would ask the minister to make a quick decision so that this project can get under way this year.

Mr. Gérald Laniel (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have this opportunity to try to enlighten the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie) and bring him up to date on this project. The St. John's dockyard, as he knows, is a federal government dockyard operated by Canadian National. It came under federal ownership at the time of the union of Newfoundland with Canada. I know I do not have to tell the hon. member these things. As he knows, in response to CN's representations that the facility could not be operated effectively in its present state, a federal interdepartmental examination of the matter concluded that there is a need for a more effective drydocking system and also identified newly emerging market opportunities to which the hon. member referred, that could enhance operations if exploited properly.

From this emerged a plan for a marine elevator type of drydocking facility that could lift vessels weighing up to approximately 4,000 tonnes out of the water and transfer them to one of three working areas onshore. The number of working areas planned for St. John's was limited, by design, to three, so that no excess capacity would exist that might cause a shift of business from Marystown shipyard, which is owned by the province.

As the hon. member knows, both the Liberal and Conservative governments approved the plan whereby the Department of Public Works would construct the facility at a cost not to exceed \$15 million in terms of 1978 dollars, and lease it to CN for a 25-year term at a rate that would reflect recovery of 65 per cent of the capital plus interest at the Crown corporation borrowing rate. CN accepted the proposal and Treasury Board authorized the Department of Public Works to fund and proceed with the initial engineering work.

The initial engineering work is now complete but reflects a situation where the estimated cost, at \$23.4 million in terms of 1980 dollars, is much more than the \$2 million difference to which the hon. member referred. Of course, in terms of 1980 dollars it exceeds the limit previously agreed by CN and by the government. Consequently the project is now under review by both parties, and alternative ways to bring costs within agreed limits are under examination.

The hon. member speaks of sabotage and political interference. To my mind this is just a responsible way for a government to look at a problem and try and make a decision.

Adjournment Debate

I am sure, from the remarks of the minister in reply to the hon. member's questions in the House and from the notes and the information that I have gathered, that this question is being considered very seriously by this responsible government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Order, please. I want to recognize the hon. member for Comox-Powell River (Mr. Skelly) next. First, however, I would extend the apologies of the Chair because I permitted hon. members a bit of leeway. Perhaps the hon. member will recognize that between himself and the parliamentary secretary who will reply there are now only five minutes remaining before the adjournment.

SEARCH AND RESCUE—INQUIRY WHY CAPABILITY ON WEST COAST NOT UPGRADED

Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox-Powell River): Mr. Speaker, on May 5 I put a question to the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Lamontagne) to find out why, in light of the tragic sinking of a vessel off the west coast of British Columbia with the loss of 30 lives, his department refused to upgrade search and rescue capabilities on the west coast, and why there was a cutback on programs that had been promised. I also asked the minister if he could explain why he was not prepared to submit to the House two reports which he held from the Department of National Defence and the Ministry of Transport that analysed and made recommendations concerning this accident. His answer was basically that improvements had been made. Although they were not to my liking, undoubtedly they were unfolding as they should.

• (2225)

I would now challenge that minister to show that improvements have occurred over the last few years and that his department can deliver a rescue platform to the site of an emergency any sooner than they were able to do ten years ago. In fact, on the central coast of B.C. it still takes from three and a half to five and a half hours to place a rescue helicopter in that area, no matter whether it comes from Comox in Canada or Sitka in the United States. Nine out of ten times the rescue helicopters tend to come from Sitka.

I would also challenge the minister to show that he has not in fact cut back on improvements promised. First, five helicopters, CH113s and CH113As, were committed to go to CFB Comox. Would he confirm that these helicopters were assigned to this facility?

Next is the SARCUP program which is the helicopter upgrading program. Fourteen helicopters, CH113s and CH113As, were to be upgraded. Could the minister confirm that he has not cut back on that program and that he now intends only to upgrade 11 of those 14 helicopters?

Could the minister further assure us that the original automatic hover equipment that was to be used to provide automatic hovering references to stabilize the aircraft when hovering over heavy seas to pick something or somebody out the water, that he has not now substituted a less sophisticated, less expensive and less effective system?