

*Merchant Seamen Compensation Act*

substance. The committee has now held its sessions. It has recommended the amendments that I suggested earlier, and one other one of a minor character, and it is reporting back to the house.

**Mr. Churchill:** I think it would be unwise for us to rush through a bill as important as this and as lengthy, despite the considerations of the committee. There are certain amendments which have to be looked at and the house would make itself look ridiculous if it pushed through a bill of this character in two or three minutes. We are not opposed to considering one or two other items if they are short and non-controversial.

**Mr. McIlraith:** Mr. Speaker, perhaps I could clarify the matter. We are quite agreeable to this not being proceeded with but I want to clear up one small matter. It is on the list I provided the house leader of the official opposition, but in any event we are quite content not to proceed with it now. It would be agreeable to us to call order No. 7 which I think is a bill of a nature that is not controversial, dealing with the Merchant Seamen Compensation Act.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Batten):** Does the house agree that it be deemed order No. 76 has not been read?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

### MERCHANT SEAMEN COMPENSATION ACT

#### AMENDMENTS RESPECTING COMPENSATION ON INJURY OR DEATH

**Hon. G. J. McIlraith (for the Minister of Labour)** moved the second reading of Bill No. C-131, to amend the Merchant Seamen Compensation Act.

**Mr. Churchill:** Where is the minister in charge?

**Mr. J. A. Byrne (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Labour):** Mr. Speaker—

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** You are speaking from a good position over there.

**Mr. Knowles:** Shouldn't the hon. member be in his right seat?

**Mr. Churchill:** Where is the Minister of Labour?

**Mr. Byrne:** Since the sittings of the house were out of order for such long periods today at the earlier stages I thought it would be more convenient to conduct the proceedings from one of the seats on the front bench.

[Mr. Gordon.]

In the absence of the minister, who is receiving a delegation today, I have been asked to proceed with this measure. While it does not seem to be one of exceeding importance it does have the effect of paying compensation primarily to the widows and dependants of merchant seamen who lost their lives in the performance of their duties. Because these accidents took place some years ago the rate of compensation is of course not in line with present practices and payments.

On the resolution stage the minister made a somewhat lengthy statement and of course I have a rather lengthy prepared statement here this afternoon. But understanding that the house wishes to proceed as rapidly as possible with these various measures I thought a short summary might be acceptable. The bill applies to no more than 2,300 seamen who are not otherwise covered by provincial statutes. The adjustments to be made will be made through the consolidated revenue fund as is the common practice under provincial statutes but with the adjustments in the future being paid by the employer. The measure provides for the raising of the age limit with respect to payments to dependants between 18 and 21 years of age having regard to the practice in other spheres of jurisdiction and to the policy of the government to keep children and youths in school as long as they are able to absorb the training open to them. For these reasons the payments will be extended to 21 years if the dependant remains in a recognized institution of learning.

During the resolution stage the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Cameron) inquired why the rates of which benefits are paid are not more in line with those in existence on the west coast. It should be pointed out that this legislation does not affect seamen on the west coast. In any event I believe the amendments do bring the basis upon which compensation is paid up to \$5,000 from \$4,500, which is in line with the provisions of provincial statutes. The hon. member for Timiskaming (Mr. Peters) was concerned that there seemed to be relatively few who were receiving permanent partial disability payments. This is because of the sad fact that most of the permanent disability payments are on behalf of dependants of seamen who lost their lives during the performance of their duties. There are I believe some five seamen receiving permanent partial disability or total disability payments.