

Vessel Construction Act

important to consider just what their powers are and what position they have taken. The commission was set up just two years ago after demands had been made for several years from all sections of the house. The United States for a long time has had a maritime commission responsible for advising the government on the marine policy of that country; it has really had control of the shipping and shipbuilding business in that neighbour nation. The Canadian maritime commission was sought in order that it might do for us the same job of work as was being done for the United States by the United States maritime commission. When we received the bill setting up the commission we found that it did not go as far as the United States bill, but the main job of the Canadian maritime commission was defined as being to advise the government and to advise parliament. Hon. members will find the duties set out in section 6 of the Canadian Maritime Commission Act, which is chapter 52 of the statutes of 1947. That section reads as follows:

The commission shall consider and recommend to the minister from time to time such policies and measures as it considers necessary for the operation, maintenance, manning and development of a merchant marine and a shipbuilding and ship-repairing industry commensurate with Canadian maritime needs.

It will thus be seen that great reliance was placed on this commission. In effect, it was supposed to work out and to recommend a shipbuilding and shipping policy for Canada. It was also given power to have advisory committees. Section 9 provides:

With the approval of the minister, the commission may establish and appoint the members of such committee or committees as it deems advisable to confer with and advise the commission with respect to any matter within its jurisdiction.

The commission has actually set up advisory committees, has called in leading people from all parts of the country, and has had their recommendations. It did not begin to function until November, 1947. Although the bill was passed earlier that year, the commissioners were not appointed until November 1, 1947. Under their act they are required to file a report. Last year they filed a report dealing with the five months of their operation from November 1, 1947 to March 31, 1948. In view of the fact that they had been operating for such a short time, they were not in a position to report much to parliament. They really were not yet in a position to make recommendations to parliament as to what policy should be adopted. For that reason the next report that they were to make, for the year from March 31, 1948, to March 31, 1949, was of the utmost importance.

[Mr. Green.]

Section 13 of the act, which provides for an annual report, reads as follows:

The commission shall as soon as possible after the thirty-first day of March in each year and in any event within three months thereof submit to the minister an annual report in such form as the minister may prescribe of its affairs and operations during the twelve-month period ending on the thirty-first day of March, and the minister shall lay the said report before parliament forthwith if parliament is then in session, or, if parliament is not then in session, within the first fifteen days of the next ensuing session.

Actually the report was dated June 30; that is, it was dated at the last possible day after March 31, but it was not tabled in the House of Commons until November 24, not quite two weeks ago. Here is another instance of a minister and the government failing to comply with the provisions of a statute. In this case that deliberate breach of the terms of a statute is unfair to the house and unfair to the Canadian people.

Mr. Chevrier: I wish my hon. friend would omit the word "deliberate".

Mr. Green: The failure to file the report may not have been deliberate. Only the minister and the government know that. But the law called for the tabling of that report within fifteen days after this session commenced. It should have been tabled on the last day of September of this year. The position was that Canada's shipping and shipbuilding industries were steadily declining, that ships were being sold to other flags, that other ships were being laid up and that Canadian sailors were being put on the beach, that is, were losing their jobs. The government had promised action in the spring and had not taken it. It had promised action again in the speech from the throne of this session and yet the minister failed to table that report. It was not just another report. It was not like the report of a department which more or less follows the report of the year before. Here is a report which outlines the whole background of Canadian shipping and shipbuilding, and makes recommendations as to what should be done.

That was the job of the commissioners, and they have actually brought in one of the most comprehensive and worth-while reports that I have ever seen tabled in the House of Commons. Yet the house was not given the opportunity to view the whole picture as set out in the report, and to make up its mind as to what policy should be adopted in regard to shipbuilding and shipping. The men engaged in these two industries across Canada were not given that opportunity, and the Canadian people were not given the opportunity to review this report in order that they might make up their minds what policy should be adopted to meet a very