

Navigable Waters Protection Act

the season of 1951. This was done by presidential directive in the United States and by order of the governor in council in Canada.

Although more than 30,000 applications have been received and processed since that time, I am very happy to say that it has not been my unpleasant duty except on very rare occasions to refuse cards to these applicants. In these infrequent cases, the applicant's loyalty had been in such serious doubt, and hence the risk to a vital communications system was sufficiently grave, that I had no alternative, in conscience, but to refuse identity cards to this handful of people. Only a tiny fraction of the seamen involved have had to be prevented from sailing, but of course only a tiny fraction would have been required to do damage. Whether or not such persons would in fact run the risk of committing acts of sabotage we cannot say with certainty; but we do know that such acts have been committed elsewhere with serious results.

While I had intended to give the information at the committee stage, perhaps at this stage the house would like to have a summary of the figures under the regulations.

As of April 26, 1954, a total of 30,540 applications had been received and processed under the regulations. Some of the applications were imperfect, and the persons who made the applications could not be traced when the national employment service attempted to follow them up. Of the remainder, 29,971 were sent to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for checking. Of these, a total of 29,571 had been screened, while 400 cases were still under investigation.

Of the 29,571 applicants screened, a total of 29,422 were cleared and 149 applications were questioned.

Of the 149 cases which were questioned for the reason that information had been received having a possible bearing on security, 122 were cleared as the result of a study of the circumstances by the minister's panel of advisers, while 20 were refused regular seamen's cards and seven cases were in abeyance, pending a decision as to whether or not cards should be issued when the individuals can be traced.

As of April 26, 1954, seven of the persons denied cards had made requests for a review of their cases by the minister's advisory committee. In the case of one of these, further investigation resulted in the person being cleared without a review by the minister's advisory committee. In three cases the committee confirmed the minister's decision to refuse a seaman's card. Two requests for review lapsed, one for the reason that the

[Mr. Gregg.]

subject was deported and no further action was required under the great lakes security regulations, and the other for the reason that the person concerned did not present himself for a hearing. One request was still pending at that date.

During recent weeks, the government has discussed at some length with United States authorities the possibility of allowing these regulations to lapse with the Emergency Powers Act. In the light of the present international situation, however, we have come to the conclusion that it would be imprudent not to continue these regulations. I regret that it has not been possible to introduce this measure before now. However, the vast majority of the seamen now sailing the great lakes have already been screened and, if parliament sees fit to approve the measure now submitted for its consideration, no great harm can come from this short hiatus between the date of the expiration of the Emergency Powers Act and the present time. I should add that it is not this government's intention that these security control measures should continue indefinitely, and that is why enabling legislation is now being sought for a period of three years only. If, at the end of three years, present international tensions have not slackened, it may be necessary for the government to ask parliament to renew this section of the bill for a further period. If, on the other hand, there should be sufficient improvement in the international situation before then, the government will be only too glad to take the first opportunity to cancel the regulations even before the enabling legislation has ceased to have effect.

Mr. Drew: Mr. Speaker, without attempting to enter the debate again, in view of the explanation given by the minister and conceding immediately that there must be some regulatory authority in regard to possible sabotage, can the minister explain why it is desirable to have such wide-open and undefined powers as these, instead of having some over-all section of the Criminal Code or, if necessary, a separate act which would apply to all vital means of transportation, and such vital operations as hydroelectric power plants—which, perhaps, are even more critical than ships, in the general picture of security.

I would ask the minister if consideration has been given to the enactment of a provision that would apply to all these, rather than attempt to put it in, piecemeal, in a single act, with such indefinite authority as is contained in this section?

Mr. Speaker: I suggest that other hon. members who wish to participate in the debate