

Supply—Transport

the possibility of supplementing the Canadian National coastal service with icebreakers so as to lengthen the period during which the Canadian National coastal ships could operate in northern Newfoundland each year.

Mr. Hees: I shall be glad to look into that. I should like to say to the hon. member that there is nothing wrong in his request for more and more service. He is simply doing a job and being a good member of parliament. We will look into it.

Mr. Herridge: I have been waiting for quite some time to say a few words on item 415 with regard to the inspection of life-saving equipment. I have to leave in a few minutes to attend to a matter in my office, but I think I am in order in saying a few words now. As usual, I speak from experience and not only from academic knowledge of the question.

I have always been particularly interested in the development of life-saving equipment and safety on the water. I will tell you why. A good many years ago I was, in effect, drowned. I was on a boat that sprang a leak and sank under me, along with some other people who were on board, in the middle of a very large lake. At that time I could not swim. The seams in the bottom of the boat opened up quite unexpectedly. I shall never forget the incident because I have relived those minutes often over the years. After the first few minutes drowning was not an unpleasant experience. It was like being lulled into oblivion by listening to hon. members opposite reading their speeches. Fortunately someone on the shore saw what was happening and came out with another boat. I was rescued by Mr. Dan McLean, who had me taken to shore. After the application of artificial respiration for about 30 minutes I was brought back to consciousness.

I trust everyone will realize my interest in this subject since that time. The interesting side of the story, Mr. Chairman, is that Mr. Dan McLean was president of the West Kootenay Liberal association and the Liberal candidate in the election of 1945. I defeated him, and that is how I showed my gratitude to him for his kindness. However, I can truthfully say that I owe the most precious thing, my life, to a prominent member of the Liberal party and I give full credit to him for that.

I noticed that this subject was mentioned previously during the debate. I mention it, first of all, because of my own particular interest and also because a number of groups in my constituency, launch clubs and boat clubs, organizations of that type, are anxious to see water safety measures improved and developed. In our district, and I presume it

is the same in all other districts where waters are traversed by small craft, there has been a tremendous increase in the number of watercraft being used. There has been a great increase in speed, and there has been also an increase in inexperience because you get young people particularly, with no knowledge of the rules of the road, on the water and with no idea of how to operate a craft safely and properly. Some people drive these high-powered small craft at speeds of 30, 40 and in some cases even 50 miles an hour, past people in rowboats or other small craft with no idea of the consequences of their thoughtlessness.

I know the department has given considerable study to this question. I remember that in 1958 I received a letter from the very genial deputy minister informing me of a meeting that was to be held with respect to government approval of life-saving equipment for pleasure craft. The paragraph at the end of the letter reads:

Attached is a short resume of present departmental policy regarding construction, inspection, testing and design.

I presume that refers to the life-saving equipment. Unfortunately I was not able to attend. I would have been glad to attend because, as I say, I am very interested in this subject. There is attached to this letter a document dealing with approved life-saving equipment. This was in 1958. I just want to ask the minister this question: Has the policy of the department changed or have there been any changes since this document was sent to all members in 1958 with respect to the approval of life-saving equipment?

I have one or two other remarks to make. The people I represent have asked me particularly to mention this to the minister. They believe in the need for very strict regulations with respect to water traffic generally, particularly small craft, because it is there you often get inexperienced, unlicensed personnel as the operators. With the increase in size of small craft and the increase in power, we may be coming to a time when we shall find it necessary to have some sort of rudimentary examination to make certain that the people who use these fast vessels, particularly in crowded waters, know how to operate them safely, and that they have a thorough understanding of the needs with respect to life-saving equipment, including life preservers, fire extinguishers and things of that sort. Even today I am on the water quite a lot because I am very fond of the water—that is to ride on it. I have seen over and over again boats being operated without fire extinguishers, without life preservers and things of that sort by people