

Mr. HOWE: All equipment was taken off by the navy before they were delivered to the Sorel yards as surplus. Even the compass was taken off. The boats were stripped of everything usable.

Mr. FRASER: I have a return in which it is stated that the ships were sold with ordinary running gear except secret equipment or articles still required for the purpose of the Department of National Defence (Navy). It is stated that guns are either removed or rendered useless. Do I understand that the guns are in many instances left on?

Mr. HOWE: Is not my hon. friend talking about corvettes?

Mr. FRASER: This is in regard to Fairmiles and corvettes.

Mr. HOWE: But these are neither Fairmiles nor corvettes.

Mr. FRASER: Yes, they are.

Mr. HOWE: My hon. friend is talking about corvettes when he talks about guns. In these cases all gear was stripped off and they were sold as hulls with engines.

Mr. FRASER: The question I asked had reference to Fairmiles and corvettes. The question was: Are these ships sold in running condition? That had reference to corvettes and Fairmiles sold by War Assets Corporation. The next question I asked was: Is sale by auction, tender or fixed price? The answer was that a set price is fixed by War Assets Corporation and that the ships are sold with ordinary running gear except secret equipment or articles still required for the purpose of the Department of National Defence (Navy). Further it is stated that the guns are either removed or rendered useless. I asked this question: Are these ships stripped of everything except running gear? The reply was that this was answered by No. 2 and that No. 4 was answered by No. 2.

Mr. HOWE: My hon. friend notices that it says everything is taken off that is usable.

Mr. FRASER: Except running gear, and that includes compass.

Mr. HOWE: No.

Mr. FRASER: Oh, yes; it certainly would. I understand that in practically all cases the compass is left on.

Mr. HOWE: I can assure my hon. friend that the compasses were taken off the Fairmiles.

[Mr. Cockeram.]

Mr. FRASER: Then why did not the answer so indicate?

Mr. HOWE: I cannot say.

Mr. FRASER: That is the trouble in the House of Commons. We get a return tabled and it is not complete.

An hon. MEMBER: What department?

Mr. FRASER: This is the Department of Reconstruction.

Mr. HOWE: That is the trouble; we are talking about munitions and supply now.

Mr. BROOKS: I understood the minister to say that one reason why these Fairmiles were sold at the present time was that otherwise they would have to be kept at Sorel through the winter and it would be very difficult to keep them during that period. Were there no other ports on the Atlantic coast where they might have been kept through the winter with a view to obtaining a better price next year or at some other time? Was it necessary to keep them at Sorel?

Mr. HOWE: They were advertised in every newspaper in Canada for over a month, and we received no offers at all. It was not encouraging therefore to keep them. How long should we have kept them? Would they become more valuable by age?

Mr. BROOKS: My question was whether it was necessary to keep them at Sorel. Could they not have been kept at some other port? I understood the minister to say that they had to be sold in a hurry.

Mr. HOWE: The department accepts these ships wherever the navy delivers them.

Mr. FRASER: The minister said they were advertised in every newspaper in Canada.

Mr. HOWE: All the principal newspapers.

Mr. FRASER: I do not agree with the minister on that.

Mr. HOWE: I shall be glad to table copies of the advertisement.

Mr. FERGUSON: One would gather from the minister's remarks that there was no interest on the part of the shipyards in the purchasing of these boats. Nevertheless by the middle of September they were all sold. There are very few products sold in Canada in respect to the sale of which the same interest is displayed.

Mr. HOWE: They were not sold in that period.

Mr. FERGUSON: I am taking the minister's figures. Perhaps I misunderstood him, but that is what I understood him to say.