

Supply—Transport

place his views on record at that time. I could get the information and send it to him, if it is merely for his private information.

Mr. Green: Would the minister try to get it from the Minister of Transport? There are many questions to be asked him in respect of other items in his department.

Mr. Abbott: I understood there was one item in particular about which the hon. member wished to question the minister. As I said before, he is now attending a meeting of the railways committee. I would be prepared to let this item stand so that the minister could deal with it.

Mr. White (Middlesex East): There is an item in the main estimates for the St. Lawrence seaway, and I have one or two observations to make.

Mr. Abbott: I think we will be having items in that connection in the main estimates for some years to come.

Item stands.

Marine service steamers—

607. Construction or acquisition of vessels and equipment, as detailed in the estimates—further amount required, \$291,907.

Mr. Brooks: I notice that this item is for icebreaker service in the St. Lawrence and northern areas. What is the cost of the icebreaker service in the St. Lawrence river, and what is the main purpose in opening the river? Those of us who come from the maritime provinces realize that every day the St. Lawrence river is open before its normal time means a day less in the use of the winter ports of Saint John and Halifax.

Mr. Abbott: Coming from Montreal, the sooner the St. Lawrence is opened the more pleased I am.

Mr. Brooks: I do not see why we should spend this large amount of money simply to please the minister.

Mr. Abbott: But Montreal pays its fair share of the taxes to open the river, too.

Mr. Brooks: There is no question about that. Is there any other reason for these icebreakers being used? I understand it is on account of flooding, and I should like to have some information.

Mr. Abbott: That is my understanding. I cannot claim to be an expert on this matter of course. I understand that the operation of the two icebreakers in the river in the winter is to minimize the danger of flooding, particularly the Sorel islands and further

down, and they cut a narrow channel and keep it open as far as Sorel, during most of the winter.

Mr. Brooks: The main object is not to steal business from Saint John and Halifax.

Mr. Abbott: Oh, just the reverse.

Item agreed to.

River St. Lawrence ship channel service—

609. Contract dredging—further amount required, \$1,899,989.

Mr. Green: May we have an explanation?

Mr. Abbott: Yes. This is the St. Lawrence ship channel dredging contract which runs over a period of years, I think it is five years, and is paid for on a progress basis. At the beginning of the year we included in the main estimates an estimated amount of dredging that would be done, and the amount in the main estimates this year was \$2,500,000 under vote 462. The item here of \$1,899,989 is to cover the cost of additional dredging performed during 1953, arising as a result of favourable weather and availability of the contractors' equipment. With this supplementary the total payment to the end of the current fiscal year under the existing contract, the 1952 contract, will be \$7,533,290.

Mr. Green: That covers more than one year?

Mr. Abbott: Oh, yes, that covers the work done to date, on the five-year contract.

Mr. Green: What was the total paid for the fiscal year?

Mr. Abbott: The total paid for the fiscal year with this amount will be \$2,500,000 plus this \$1,899,989, \$4,399,989.

Item agreed to.

Railway and steamship services—

612. Canadian National (West Indies) Steamships, Limited, deficit, 1953—To provide for the payment to the Canadian National (West Indies) Steamships, Limited (hereinafter called the company) of the amount of the deficit for the year ending December 31, 1953 in the operations of the company and the vessels under the control of the company, as certified by the auditors of the company to the Minister of Finance and approved by the Minister of Transport, \$649,662.

Mr. Bell: Can the minister tell us how many ships are in active operation now and is it the intention to keep them in operation?

Mr. Abbott: The fleet now consists of eight vessels. The *Lady Rodney* and the *Lady Nelson* were withdrawn from service and