

Adjournment Debate

have been able to provide a break, if you like, in what seemed to be a firm boundary which had been drawn around the issue from Canada's point of view and from the point of view of the United States. Through the appointments of Mr. Lewis and Mr. Davis, I think we have a serious opportunity to see that impasse broken down. I know the Hon. Member was pleased, as were we, to see that Mr. Lewis was thinking seriously of making specific recommendations, not only in terms of abatement control now, but in terms of dealing with the whole issue on a long-term basis so that we can accomplish the entire chore which we set out to accomplish.

I have to take some exception to the allusions which have been made, not only in the newspaper article, but also here in the House of Commons, insofar as Mr. Davis is concerned. We in Canada had at the time that Mr. Davis was appointed a need for someone of his stature, his experience and, in fact, someone in whom the United States would have confidence, to carry the ball for us at that level. Mr. Davis happened to be available. I cannot account directly, Mr. Speaker, for the proportion of finances Mr. Davis has used and where they fall in terms of travel, office expenses and so on. I would have to challenge the Hon. Member to tell me if he has never had his secretary make a personal call for him. I believe the Canadian public should know—and in most ways do know—that not only is the job itself so serious and important that the actual amount spent by the envoys is very small indeed in comparison, but that both Mr. Lewis and Mr. Davis are working for \$1 dollar a year. I do not know how many Members of Parliament would do that.

● (1810)

There are things which have to go on in the meantime. Life goes on for people who are dedicating themselves; to the extent of energy and effort which both Mr. Lewis and Mr. Davis have put into this effort. If there were calls made on behalf of Mr. Davis for the scheduling of other things, I really wonder whether the Hon. Member thinks that that is a serious affront to the sense of propriety we would all like to have. Unless the Hon. Member and other members of the press want to continue to try to raise the issue from this point of view, I do not believe it in any way jeopardizes the respect which the Americans will have for the efforts of Mr. Davis and the respect which we all should have for the contribution he is making on behalf of Canada in trying to come to firm grips with the acid rain problem.

SHIPBUILDING—HALIFAX INDUSTRIES LIMITED. (B)
GOVERNMENT PLANS

Mr. Ernie Epp (Thunder Bay-Nipigon): Mr. Speaker, on June 27 I pressed the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion (Mr. Stevens) to take action to ensure that the Canadian shipbuilding industry might again experience prosperity. The immediate focus of my question was the threat of bankruptcy facing Halifax Industries Limited, a matter about which some action was eventually taken. However, I noted the plight of the shipbuilding industry generally.

This is an industry which is in distress and which is baffled by the failure of the Government to act on promises made during the last election campaign to create a more viable and prosperous Canadian shipbuilding industry. The Minister said that he did not plan to let months and months pass before doing something. Today it is 10 days short of three months since he gave that response and we are still awaiting his announcement of measures to create a prosperous shipbuilding industry.

The last days have produced mixed signals for the industry. Ontario shipyard operators and workers, who appreciate the recent decision of the Department of National Defence to allow them to share in refitting work on Canada's aging naval vessels, are distressed to think that the Department may change its mind on this issue. In my own riding, Port Arthur shipbuilding, which is primarily involved in repair work, is one of the yards very concerned about the possibility of the Department going back on that recent decision.

The Government's decision last week to order the construction of the Polar Class 8 icebreaker for year-round service in the Arctic, on the other hand, will create a significant amount of work, possibly in more than one yard. However, the decision was in response to Canadian sovereignty considerations rather than reflective of any developing industrial strategy, or at least there has been no evidence to suggest that it was not primarily those sovereignty considerations which guided the Government.

I would suggest that as the Government continues to consider this matter and, hopefully, comes to an early decision, the possibility that an industrial strategy might be initiated by Government construction is a subject which should be immediately before the Ministers involved. The Canadian patrol frigate program for our navy, the construction of icebreakers of various sorts, the construction of ferries for CN Marine in particular, provide examples of construction which the Government directly or through corporations can carry on. By doing that on a reasonable schedule the Government could ensure that yards are kept at work and that technical capacity in the form of computer assisted design and manufacturing is built into our yards. By keeping the yards at work we could ensure that we have the necessary shipbuilding capacity for the future.

● (1815)

I would suggest that an important part of that approach needs to be the ship construction for Maritime Command. As we realize more and more the state of our navy, it becomes obvious there are many vessels to replace. That can certainly be a part of such a program.

However, the shipbuilders are anxious that their business not be based solely on Government orders. I quite appreciate their desire for a large volume of commercial construction. I point particularly to that as an area where the Government needs to be far more active. There are a variety of areas in which such construction will be needed. There are the inland fleets, particularly on the St. Lawrence and Great Lakes.