

Supply—Transport

information is that United Kingdom owners are complaining that current rates are unremunerative.

A third cause, that of devaluation, has placed the Canadian operators in a difficult position. The results of devaluation cannot be clearly seen at this moment because ships are chartered for months in advance and it is impossible to estimate with accuracy the difference that will occur in operation costs.

Another feature which has given the government a great deal of concern is the overall picture that must be considered, not only with respect to our own ships but with respect to the movement of commodities in bottoms from Canada to European and world markets. The whole shipping problem is of such magnitude that I am sure my hon. friend will not expect me to tell him what the policy is at the moment. The government is giving a great deal of consideration to a number of plans. I wish I could say what those plans are but I do not think it is in the public interest to do so. I want my hon. friend to know that careful consideration is being given to the best way to meet the present position.

Mr. Black (Cumberland): Will that policy be declared before prorogation?

Mr. Chevrier: I am afraid I cannot give my hon. friend any definite assurance as to when it will be. It certainly will not be in the immediate future because until the picture of the effects of devaluation is clearer than it is at the moment, any policy announced now would be simply premature.

Mr. Green: Will legislation be introduced at this session?

Mr. Chevrier: Legislation was announced in the speech from the throne and it is my intention to bring down legislation during the session.

Mr. Black (Cumberland): I should like to point out—

Mr. Chevrier: Will my hon. friend allow me to make the statement? I am trying to reply to the hon. member for Halifax on the general position. After I have completed it, if my hon. friend wants to ask any questions, he may.

Mr. Black (Cumberland): I want to point out that it is urgent to a great many people that a policy be declared.

Mr. Chevrier: Let me tell my hon. friend that no one realizes more than I how urgent it is. The statement which he has made to the effect that it is urgent certainly does not add anything to the debate, as I see it. I am fully conscious of the seriousness of the problem. I said so a moment ago and I repeat

now that to move into this position too quickly when one does not know what the effects of devaluation are likely to be might be far more serious now than in two or three months. I am sorry to say that perhaps more ships will have to be laid up, but the condition is not one peculiar to this country. To a large extent it is world-wide, and I do not think the government should be pushed into making an immediate decision when the problem is one that requires more than ordinary consideration.

My hon. friend suggested one or two remedies, one being something like vote 488 of the estimates. I am glad to tell him that that is a matter that will receive consideration. I am unable to see whether it would be of assistance at the moment. The rates he has referred to are fixed by world markets and I am not in position to state whether a subsidy paid to the shipper would be an answer to the problem. I think there is an answer, but I doubt if it lies along that line.

The hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra asked what the Norwegian costs were. They are \$506.68 per day, and apparently the Swedish costs are the same. There are 4,800 United States ships of 100 gross tons or over, making a total of 26,900,000 gross tons. I assume that of that 4,800 ships the 2,050 that I mentioned a moment ago have been laid up.

The hon. member also brought up the question of merchant seamen which was discussed the other evening by the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra and the hon. member for Vancouver East. Perhaps the best way to handle that briefly is to say that the officers of the Department of Transport and of the Department of Veterans Affairs are governed by the terms of order in council P.C. 5983. They are putting into effect the conditions laid down in that order in council which was passed following a recommendation by the veterans affairs committee that merchant seamen under the age of 30 years who were receiving certain benefits and certain bonuses should be entitled to vocational training other than what was available prior to the passing of the order in council. Up to that time the only vocational training they were receiving had to do with their own calling and they were then entitled to vocational training of any kind such as that given to veterans of the armed services. As I said a moment ago, those two conditions, the one of age and the time limit of June 30, were fixed by the order in council and the officers of the departments are simply putting that order into effect. In order to change that an order in council amending those regulations would be necessary, and of course that would have to