

Merchant Seaman Compensation Act

of keeping the household together, I am sure that these hon. gentlemen when they are dealing with these matters have the welfare of the child very much at heart. But I am directing attention to the psychological influence of the board having to consider further the fact that we have put more emphasis on money than we have on the family unit. In other words, by giving greater scope and more possibilities to pay increased money if the family unit is broken up, you take away some of the pressure which normally is there to keep that family unit together.

I am not sure how effective this proposal is. The parliamentary secretary from Halifax mentioned that this situation had not arisen. I hope it does not arise. Perhaps there is much worry about very little. However, whether or not there has been an actual case, the principle about which I am speaking, namely, the emphasis on keeping together the family unit, this method of caring for the welfare of orphans, cannot be overemphasized. We must be extremely careful not to put the emphasis on pure money matters and so detract from what I consider to be the most important principle in caring for the welfare of these children and maintaining the family unit.

The hon. member for Burin-Burgeo when he spoke on this bill said there was no need to say much. I suppose it is against the rules—if I had a chance to know what he was going to say the situation might have been different—but I wish he could have dealt a little bit more fully with this matter. While I said to the house that I am not disinterested personally in fishermen, I realize that my connection is a distant and a rather tenuous one. It may very well be that he is more familiar with these hardy people. It may well be that the children who are orphans of fishermen in Newfoundland, having always lived more rugged lives than apparently we are obliged to live on the prairies and having perhaps grown up in the shadow of the fear that their father at least might be taken away by the sea at any time, have a more grown up approach. It is possible that the psychological effect of this environment, the means by which their parents earned a living, the way in which they became accustomed to so many widows and perhaps orphans being around, has itself left them psychologically in a much different frame of mind. It is possible that the hon. member who introduced this bill has a better understanding of the particular type of people about whom he is talking.

In considering anything I have said I trust that hon. members will not discount the possibility that it is perhaps presumptuous of me, one who comes from the prairies, to speak.

[Mr. Nugent.]

It is easily possible that those who live by the sea and who work day in and day out with seafaring people will find that I am trying to judge them exactly as I would Canadians in other parts of the country and that I have not paid enough attention to the environmental influences. If I am wrong in this matter I trust that some member from one of the coastal areas will straighten the house out, if I have led it astray in any way.

Mr. John Smith (Lincoln): In rising to speak briefly on this bill, Mr. Speaker, I should first of all like to congratulate the hon. member for Burin-Burgeo who saw fit to bring this matter to our attention. I may say that I appreciate many of the things the hon. member has done over the past few years. He is one who has always been ready to speak on behalf of those who were obliged to face the perils of the sea, namely our fishermen and our merchant seamen. It is quite fitting that he should bring this bill to our attention at the present time.

Coming as I do from the banana belt, as it is often called, in the Niagara peninsula I fully realize that it is perhaps not too appropriate for me to discuss too deeply the merits of this bill.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I rise on a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker. Does my hon. friend not know that the banana belt is in southwestern Ontario, Essex county in particular?

Mr. Smith (Lincoln): We have the banana belt. In any event, if we wish to get along with this bill, I think perhaps we had better begin to discuss it. However, before doing so I should just like to mention this fact. Over the years this government, like other governments, has introduced many measures to make seafaring, both on the ocean and on the great lakes, much safer than it used to be. I was very happy this year to note that we brought in a measure to provide coast guard service for Canada, something that we have needed for a long time.

As far as the bill is concerned may I say this. It certainly has a great deal of merit. It brings to our attention a problem which arises in the riding from which the sponsor of the bill comes more than it does in mine. However, I do not feel that we should move too quickly on it. I think it is a matter to which we should give a great deal of attention. After all, the first intention of the act is to preserve the integrity of the family home or to keep the family together. I would be inclined to feel that by broadening it out as far as the hon. member proposes, we might find there would be a tendency to break up those