

see if they were sufficient and to examine the safety standards and practices that were employed at the time of that disaster.

The royal commission to which I referred produced a very comprehensive and excellent report. It was detailed, it uncovered every stone and it looked at every facet of the events leading up to this marine disaster. The report was passionate in its approach and committed to preventing such occurrences from happening again. I am told that it was a \$15 million exercise.

The commissioners made some very specific recommendations to the Minister of Transport and tabled a report in August, 1984, about a month before the last election. They made some very specific recommendations to the Government of Canada, recommendations that they hoped would be contained within pending changes to the Canada Shipping Act, the Bill that is before us today.

● (1610)

While I will acknowledge that some of the recommendations made have been included in Bill C-75, the single most important recommendation has not been adopted in Bill C-75. I am sure it will astound Members of this House to know that when an oil rig operates 200 miles offshore the regulations contained in the Canada Shipping Act do not apply to that oil rig. The Minister of Transport (Mr. Mazankowski) under the Canada Shipping Act has no authority over the operation of that rig under that Act when it operates 200 miles offshore. One of the primary recommendations contained in this report was that the Shipping Act be changed and the provisions of the act encompass rigs operating offshore. That has not been done, Mr. Speaker. Words, discussions, and policy formulation and debate in this palatial Chamber seldom resembles the reality of the real world. For example, our agricultural policies seldom resemble the impact on farmers in western Canada. The fishery policy seldom resembles the impact it has on fishermen in Atlantic Canada. When we talk about safety regulations and a royal commission, nothing we say here makes us truly understand why it is important that the Government of Canada under the Shipping Act regulate rigs operating offshore. I would like to refer to the report of the royal commission so that we know what we are talking about and why we are insisting that the Shipping Act govern and police the operation of rigs offshore. Most people believe that the *Ocean Ranger* went down with 84 men, that no one really got off the rig. They believe we do not know what happened but that is not true, Mr. Speaker.

A supply vessel called the *Seaforth Highlander* at 2.32 o'clock a.m. on February 15, 1982, reported a lifeboat to be alongside. Inside the lifeboat lights were on and men who had got off the *Ocean Ranger* could be seen moving about. Some of the men were bailing through the port and starboard sides. The sound of the seas and wind made voice communication between the lifeboat and the seamen on the after deck impossible. On the after deck a seaman attempted to throw a Samson rope to the lifeboat but it was blown away from its target. He then threw a line with a life ring attached to a man

Canada Shipping Act

in the aft hatch of the small capsulized lifeboat. The man, clinging for his life, caught the line and attached it to the canopy of the lifeboat. He tied the other end of the line to the cat rail on the port side of the *Seaforth Highlander*, the supply vessel.

When this was happening, seven or eight of the men in the lifeboat emerged into the port gunwell. These men were wearing hard hats and work vests or life preservers. Some were lightly clad and others wore heavier clothing. The lifeboat began to roll slowly to port away from the *Seaforth Highlander* and within seconds it capsized, throwing the men who had been standing on the port gunwale into the sea and snapping the lines which had attached to the *Seaforth Highlander*.

As the men from the lifeboat spilled into the sea, the water in the immediate area was illuminated by the lights attached to the life preservers. The lifeboat had completely capsized. The time was 2.38 o'clock a.m.

That is what we are talking about, Mr. Speaker. We are not talking about the bureaucracy. We are not talking about red tape. We are talking about the lives of people who go to sea.

We are talking about the lives of men who managed to escape that floating coffin on February 15, 1982, the *Ocean Ranger*, the men who managed to get into the capsulized raft but who were unable to be rescued. Why? The report goes on to tell us that the supply boat, despite the courage and determination of the men on it, was ill equipped to bring a capsule alongside. It was ill equipped to provide any assistance. Even though they had a line on that capsule which had men in it, alive, it was not able to rescue those men.

The report recommended as well that the Government, through the Canada Shipping Act, provide regulations for the construction and operation of those supply vessels. That is not contained in the Minister's legislation, Bill C-75. I therefore say to the Minister who tells us that he will make further changes next fall, I absolutely guarantee to the Minister that if he will make the appropriate changes as recommended by the royal commission now, he will have no trouble as far as this Party is concerned, the Liberal Party, in having this legislation moved quickly and speedily through the House of Commons.

I know that every Member of Parliament, no matter on what side of this House he sits and no matter what Party he represents, feels exactly as I do and as strongly as I do. Offshore exploration is an area which is still relatively new but it is an area where we have Canadian men and women putting their lives at risk in order to harness that resource from the sea in the most dramatic and difficult conditions in the world. We want to ensure that every possible action is taken by the Government of Canada to guarantee the health and safety of our people. I know, and the people who work the rig know, that there is no fail safe system. They go to sea in those kinds of weather conditions, doing that kind of work, putting life and limb at risk. They know that no one can give them guarantees. But surely to God, Mr. Speaker, we can give them the very best facilities, regulations and equipment that money, technology and political will can provide. That is what we ask of the Minister today.