

THE SENATE

Wednesday, January 10, 1973

The Senate met at 2 p.m., the Speaker in the Chair.
Prayers.

DOCUMENTS TABLED

Hon. Paul Martin tabled:

First Annual Report of the Law Reform Commission for the year ended May 31, 1972, pursuant to section 18 of the Law Reform Commission Act, chapter 23 (1st Supplement), R.S.C., 1970.

Amending Order No. 2, amending the Federal Court Rules, made by the Judges of the Federal Court of Canada on October 16, 1972, together with copy of Order in Council P.C. 1972-3044, date December 19, 1972, approving same, pursuant to section 46(5) of the Federal Court Act, chapter 10 (2nd Supplement), R.S.C., 1970.

Report of the Canadian Saltfish Corporation, including its accounts and financial statements certified by the Auditor General, for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1972, pursuant to section 32 of the Saltfish Act, chapter 37 (1st Supplement), and section 77(3) of the Financial Administration Act, chapter F-10, R.S.C., 1970.

Copies of contract between the Government of Canada and the City of Red Deer, Alberta, for the use or employment of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, pursuant to section 20(3) of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act, chapter R-9, R.S.C., 1970. (English text).

Reports on operations under the Regional Development Incentives Act for the months of June to November 1972, inclusive, pursuant to section 16 of the said act, chapter R-3, R.S.C., 1970.

NEWFOUNDLAND "WRACKERS"

MAGAZINE ARTICLE—QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE

Hon. Frederick William Rowe: Honourable senators, I rise on a question of privilege. The January issue of *Maclean's* magazine carries an article entitled "The Wrackers of Newfoundland," written by one Bartley Higgins. In this connection I am today addressing a letter to the editor of *Maclean's* magazine, and I should like to have the contents of that letter form part of today's proceedings in the Senate.

The Editor,
Maclean's.

In your January issue, Bartley Higgins in an article entitled "The Wrackers of Newfoundland," states:

"In years gone by, wrackers were out-and-out criminals who lured unsuspecting vessels onto the rocks, where they could be plundered at leisure. The early inhabitants of Cape Bauld and Cape Norman—

These, honourable senators, are the two capes at the extremities of the Strait of Belle Isle on the Newfoundland side.

—were noted for their tendency to set inviting false beacons on stormy nights, or when visibility at sea was poor."

This statement is untrue. There has never been the slightest evidence that people living in the Strait of Belle Isle ever tried to lure ships ashore by "false beacons," or by any other device. In fact, in Newfoundland's long maritime history—

A history which goes back to the year 1497.

—that charge has only been seriously levelled on one occasion and then it was in reference to a portion of Southern Newfoundland, not Northern. Moreover, there is reason to believe that this allegation was politically motivated. In any case it was never proven.

Higgins concludes his article with this gem: "... experienced ship captains, when they see the rugged, rockbound coast of north Newfoundland and Labrador on the horizon, still treat it with respect. For they know that there are friendly but patient men over there—waiting."

I find it incredible that *Maclean's* would print such utter rubbish. Stripping abandoned wrecks has been practised in all ages everywhere since man first put to sea. When a ship is wrecked on the coast of Newfoundland it is usually a matter of hours, or, at best days, before the ship and its contents are at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean. Failure to salvage the contents would be outright stupidity.

HMS Raleigh, probably the most modern warship then afloat—

In 1922.

—went ashore in a pea-soup fog only a few yards from a light-house in the Strait of Belle Isle. She was given up by the Admiralty, as Higgins concedes and at that point the local residents had perfect right to salvage whatever they could.

The picture that Higgins gives of Newfoundland fishermen waiting like ghouls or harpies for some unfortunate vessel to become stranded, is a complete lie. The history of Newfoundland is replete with instances where residents risked their lives, as I can personally testify, to prevent ships from going ashore. And when ships have become wrecked, Newfoundland men and women have risked, and, in some cases, given their lives to save crew and passengers.

When the American destroyers *Castor* and *Pollux* ran ashore on the South Coast of Newfoundland in a blinding blizzard in the winter of 1942, it was the incredible bravery and ingenuity of the people of Lawn and St. Lawrence that saved 176 men.

All the others were drowned.

Today, in St. Lawrence, there stands a fine modern hospital, put there by the Congress of the United