

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

These are serious facts, Mr. Speaker, very serious protests indeed, indicating that an alarming situation exists. This is not the first time such complaints are voiced with respect to Montreal and other harbours. In view of the fact that these misdeeds are widespread and have been occurring more frequently, I suggest that the Department of Transport should investigate immediately.

This is the eve of World Fair celebrations, and a very great number of visitors to Expo will be entering Montreal harbour. A great many business concerns, not only Montreal firms but also those in the eastern townships and Sherbrooke, as well as in the immediate area, use Montreal harbour. Members of the Association du camionnage de l'Estrie told me recently that they had gone to Montreal harbour to pick up goods and found, when they got there, that they had been stolen, crates had been opened and others damaged. This had happened more than once.

I feel this is prejudicial to trade and could have an adverse effect on our international repute, in view of the World Fair held in Montreal. I wish to take advantage of this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to point out very briefly to the hon. minister that the central government should take immediate action; this is important. In spite of the request of many hon. members during the present session, the government has either procrastinated or refused to appoint a royal commission of inquiry on organized crime. We know that several countries have launched such national investigations on organized crime and especially in the United States and in Italy, it has been discovered that the source of gangsterism could be found in the ports of those countries. In fact, it is through seaports that smuggling is done and this is why those networks of gangsters have connections and facilities there, either by bribing the port guards or by using any other methods liable to encourage such pilfering and misdeeds.

This is the reason why I would greatly appreciate it if the minister, by using his great persuasiveness, could convince his colleagues in the cabinet to consider seriously the possibility of establishing a royal commission to inquire into organized crime, which commission would also include investigations on seaports and also on fraudulent bankruptcies which continue to occur in Canada.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, if we say that to govern is to anticipate, then to manage is to

[Mr. Allard.]

act. This government cannot afford to stand by and witness such crimes and damages, and remain unmoved in holy meditation. Indeed not. We must act, and if to govern is to anticipate, I submit that unless the present government undertakes such inquiries immediately we may well have to face, in a matter of weeks or in a few months, calamities which could be without remedy.

For this reason, I am relying upon the initiative and good faith of the minister in urging him to take immediate steps with respect to this matter.

• (10:30 p.m.)

Hon. John N. Turner (Member of the Administration): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the remarks of my friend the hon. member for Sherbrooke (Mr. Allard) who raised a very important matter so far as the Montreal harbour and all other Canadian harbours are concerned. First of all, I must thank him for giving me notice of it this afternoon. However, in view of the ruling of the Chair, I had to wait until tonight to answer him, although I was ready to do so this afternoon.

The question gives me the opportunity to make a few comments on pilfering. That problem exists in all large harbours throughout the world, and not only in Canada, where a large volume of freight is handled I wish to point out to the hon. member that this situation is not peculiar to the Montreal harbour and I think he will readily agree.

The National Harbours Board is very conscious of the need to take the necessary steps to limit the pilfering going on in the Montreal harbour. Some of them, such as vehicle checks, are already in force and others will soon be spelled out. The closing of certain port entrances, the revision of procedure and documents with respect to the shipping of merchandise and, finally, an improved cargo guard service are planned.

I can assure the hon. member that the National Harbours Board is keeping a close watch on this matter and that the board will take all appropriate measures within the limits of its powers to eliminate as much of the pilfering as it possibly can.

Of course, the city of Montreal must share this responsibility with the National Harbours Board. I must say that, in certain cases, shippers believe that thefts occur at Montreal. But after all, a ship arriving in Montreal has been in many other parts of the world; so the thefts might have occurred elsewhere. When