

*Maritime Code*

As I drove to parliament Hill tonight, knowing there might be a chance of speaking on Bill C-61, I found it whimsical to reflect that the last time Canada had a merchant marine was way back in the days of sail, if one excludes the Canadian National Steamship boats which plied the Atlantic coast just before they were stopped during the second world war. And here in this Chamber are members from the Atlantic coast and the west coast who have lived with the sea and who want a merchant marine. They are also well aware that at least in the days of sail—and I could get very rhapsodic and philosophical about all the little Newfoundland ports we come from, and the ports along my own coastline of the Annapolis Valley—these places were viable communities some 50 years ago. I know you cannot turn back the clock; the days of sail pass into the days of steam and the days of steam pass into the days of nuclear energy, I guess. The fact that this bill ignores is that the reason there was a vibrant Canadian merchant marine in the days of sail was that there was competition between the ports of Atlantic Canada and between the skippers in those ports.

● (2130)

I will now conclude since my illustrious colleague, the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner), is usually renowned for his brevity and conciseness and I want to exhibit those same qualities and let others speak. However, having had for the first time the opportunity to speak on Bill C-61, I cannot emphasize enough that unless changes are made to preserve the cost situation and provide access to other bottoms so there can be meaningful competition, be it on the east coast or in the central part of this beautiful land, the maritime industry will be done a disservice. As I have said, the bureaucrats here in Ottawa really do not know the sea, so I hope they will come down to the sea to see for themselves.

**Mr. Alex Patterson (Fraser Valley East):** Mr. Speaker, like my colleague who has just resumed his seat, this is the first opportunity that I have had of speaking in this debate. I was afraid that I was not going to get the opportunity to speak tonight, but since I do have a few minutes I should like to make some comments on the bill now before the House.

In concert with many of my colleagues I regret the fact that Bill C-61 has been brought forward again at this time. As stated by several hon. members, not only this House but the nation as a whole had the understanding that this bill would not be brought forward for third reading until the fall. Some of the individuals and organizations interested in the bill were instituting studies into various aspects of the legislation the results of which, I believe, would bring about a much better measure than that before the House at the present time.

I think the action of the government House leader has again raised the question of the credibility of the government and of the dependability of the assurances and promises that have been given. We have had quite a discussion today about the assurances or guarantees given by the government, or which the government is willing to give regarding various measures, but I wish there were some basis upon which we could accept those assurances. Certainly a study of past statements that have been made

would not give one much hope that those assurances would be carried out.

I should like to refer, first of all, to a matter regarding which concern was expressed in earlier debates in this House. I refer to the change in location of the registry office. I realize that there have been some accommodations reached in this particular connection, but I believe that the policy in operation up until the present time is still the best one and that we should stand by that policy.

I think the government would be inconsistent in closing down the registry office and reducing its effectiveness by moving it to the city of Ottawa. This point was dealt with on second reading quite eloquently by my colleague, the hon. member for Surrey-White Rock (Mr. Friesen). I believe my colleague from Grenville-Carleton also dwelt on that topic.

The government has made much of its policy to decentralize its departments and to bring government closer to the people. I understand too that a very large part of this decentralization is for the purpose of dealing with chronic unemployment areas. In this regard two or three announcements have been made. One was in connection with a certain branch of the Department of Supply and Services, and another was brought to light a few days ago when certain agencies were moved to the city of Moncton, New Brunswick. I am not raising any objection to those moves; I am just pointing out an inconsistency in government policy.

On the one hand the government is decentralizing, moving certain government operations to the regions to encourage employment and to bring government closer to the people. On the other hand the government is moving an operation that has been highly satisfactory from the west coast to Ottawa, a distance of 3,000 miles, expecting it to give the same service to the people that it gave on the west coast. I say the government is not being consistent and I think this policy will result in a lower standard of service for the people on the west coast.

For example, Mr. Speaker, the Vancouver shipping registry office is the largest in Canada with more than 10,000 ships on file.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. Is the parliamentary secretary rising for the purpose of asking a question, or on a point or order?

**Mr. Goodale:** To ask a question, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Patterson:** Mr. Speaker, time is running short. I think the hon. member had ample opportunity to make his contribution so I would prefer he waited till I had concluded my remarks. The Vancouver shipping registry office is run by a staff of only four and is a very effective and efficient operation. I would not want to guarantee that the same degree of efficiency will be maintained if the move that is presently contemplated is carried out. The port registry performs a valuable service for all boat owners, most of whom know from personal experience the courtesies extended by the staff there. The inconvenience to the general boating public will be incalculable. Those who want to register bills of sale or mortgages will run into additional red tape which will make things more difficult.