

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

we have recognized a problem and are attempting to find a satisfactory solution.

[English]

NATIONAL REVENUE—PORT DOVER, ONT.—
FAILURE OF U.S. PLEASURE CRAFT TO
REPORT TO CUSTOMS OFFICER

Mr. William Knowles (Norfolk-Haldimand): Mr. Speaker, I am rather disappointed to find that the Minister of National Revenue is not in his seat tonight. We had made a mutual arrangement whereby he would be here to listen to my explanation of this problem and would give me an answer. I trust he will still do so having read my representations as recorded in *Hansard*.

In order to set this problem properly before you, Mr. Speaker, I should like to read the question that I presented to the house on Monday last, as reported at page 10538:

In view of the fact that on Saturday last at Port Dover, Ontario, out of seven United States pleasure boats from Erie, Pennsylvania, bringing United States dollars and good will to Canada two were fined \$10 and all were ordered to get out of Canada because they had not reported to the customs officer who was not available, will the minister devise some means of clearing our United States visitors through customs on weekends through the three summer months, which is the only time that most of the United States boats can visit Canada?

To give some indication of the importance of this issue, Mr. Speaker, I should like to tell you that the port of Port Dover is located on the north shore of Lake Erie midway along the shoreline and in the shelter of Long Point Bay. It is directly across Lake Erie from Erie, Pennsylvania, a distance of approximately 45 miles. The town of Port Dover, approximately 3,000 in population, relies for its summer revenue mainly on the tourist industry.

A rapidly expanding hobby which promotes and supplements the tourist industry is that of pleasure boating. The number of pleasure boats that cruise the shores of Lake Erie and cross the lake is increasing annually. Port Dover has a yacht club boasting a registration of about 250 boats, all capable of crossing the lake so their owners can visit their United States brothers across the way. In the past few years the federal government has spent over \$750,000 in providing harbour facilities for commercial and pleasure craft. There are two marinas in the town which are capable of servicing any pleasure craft likely to call in. They are capable of giving it a complete overhaul.

[Mr. Gendron.]

• (10:10 p.m.)

I wish to draw the minister's attention to the brief presented by the town of Port Dover. Time will not permit me to go into very great detail. In order to inform hon. members what was behind all the hubbub and furore among the residents of Port Dover, it might be well if I referred to a letter sent out from the customs office in Hamilton to the Port Dover Yacht Club. The letter first of all sets out the hours during which the customs office will be open, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. from Monday through Friday and from 9 a.m. to 12 noon on Saturday. The letter ends with this sentence: "There will be no service available to small boat operators at Port Dover beyond the hours indicated above."

One cannot blame customs officials too much for this directive. Surely, Mr. Speaker, we need to give local customs officials new directives and instructions. Our local officer ought to be given sufficient discretion to permit him to carry out his duties at the office wisely. Press reports of this unfortunate mishap at Port Dover indicate that the district customs officer said that visitors made no attempt to register when they came to Port Dover. I respectfully submit, Mr. Speaker, that this report is entirely at variance with the facts because United States boats endeavoured to clear customs with the assistance of some local yacht owners. Telephone calls were made to the office, but it was closed. Attempts were made to call the official's residence, but I understand that his telephone number is unlisted at the present time. One United States boat owner hired a taxi and was driven to the home of the customs officer, but was given no satisfaction and obtained no clearance. Many reliable witnesses will attest to the accuracy of these facts. If the minister entertains any shadow of doubt about the accuracy of what I have said I invite him to set up an independent inquiry to examine the charges made and ascertain facts. The minister should not rely entirely on the word of supervisors in the immediate area.

The United States boat owners, having failed to obtain clearance, were met at the scene by the R.C.M.P. patrol boat which arrived there a few hours later, as it was its duty to do. Two seizures were made; and not until fines of \$10 had been paid were the two boats in question released. One of these boats was, "*The Jed*," owned by Mr. John Ashby of Erie, Pennsylvania, the other being "*Cloud Nine II*", owned by Mr. E. H. Sturdevant of