

St. Lawrence Pilots Work Stoppage

main points concerning working conditions which, in their opinion, were pending, we had already accepted two and agreed in principle to two more by undertaking to work out the details of their application, and that we also had decided to pursue with them the consideration of the fifth point. I also pointed out to them that there had been no undue delay in the consideration of those matters, that, in fact, the pilots had submitted their brief less than two months ago and that several meetings and interviews had taken place since then.

We found that the main issue the pilots wished to settle concerned their income and the increase asked for by three pilotage districts. I informed them that in view of the present level of income and working conditions, their requests in that respect had seemed exaggerated, not only to the shipowners but to myself, and I asked them to meet my officials in order to study these requests in greater detail and to see if they could be modified. The requested increase in fees to be paid by the vessels came to approximately 18 per cent in the Cornwall and Montreal districts, and it remained practically the same during the following discussions, although it seemed that an adjustment could be made with regard to Montreal harbour. No important issue concerning income was involved in the Quebec and Kingston districts.

I asked the pilots to put an end to their work stoppage, in view of the fact that the pilots' federation had assured me that in such a case the shipping federation would be willing to meet immediately the pilots' representatives to study new propositions with regard to the whole question and the income the shipping federation is willing to give the pilots. Up to now the pilots' representatives have not indicated they were willing to change the requests I have mentioned or to put an end to the work stoppage.

I regret that situation because I firmly believe that the shipowners intention not to stop the ships movement can only be damaging to the pilots. I should like to add also that I believe the time has come to undertake a general investigation on all questions relating to pilotage, and I expect to submit later some proposals to be examined by the government. However, I will continue to seek a solution to this problem, and after studying further the results of yesterday's meetings I will continue to keep in touch with the various agencies involved.

Hon. Lionel Chevrier (Laurier): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious, considering what the

minister just said, that he was not successful in his effort to get the pilots and ship owners together with a view to settling the dispute. It is also apparent that, notwithstanding what the minister said, namely that the pilots have held meetings with only 24 hours notice is not true, because, according to the pilots themselves they have been discussing the matter with the department since February last. Any way, Mr. Speaker, it is quite clear that this dispute is very prejudicial to the Canadian economy, as well as to the passengers who are now on the *Empress of Britain* quite apart from being a menace to navigation, of which the department is certainly aware.

There were already two ships, the *Consuelo* and another one, the name of which I forget—

(Text):

Mr. Tremblay: The "Pearson Boat"!

(Translation):

Mr. Chevrier: —which ran aground, causing considerable damage, because of the absence of a St. Lawrence pilot.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, there is at this time a ship carrying flammable goods sailing up the St. Lawrence. I wonder whether the Department of Transport gave some consideration to the menace this represents for the communities and towns past which this vessel will sail.

Another most important point is that the minister, after having, through his officials, invited both parties to meet, did not ask the pilots to go to Montreal to discuss the situation with the shipowners.

I know that yesterday he asked them to come here, because both parties had apparently not succeeded in arranging a meeting. Now, when they arrived here, the minister told them that the strike was illegal, that they should go back to work and free the *Empress of Britain*, adding that their claims were excessive and suggesting that they review their requests.

Everybody knows that the main points under dispute are rather serious and significant, and that the main point concerns a rate increase. But what the minister seems to forget is that the tonnage of St. Lawrence vessels has developed considerably, whereas the pilots' rates have scarcely been raised. Now, it is true that on the St. Lawrence seaway ships of 2,500 to 3,000 tons have largely disappeared, so that today pilots have to steer vessels of 20,000, 25,000 and under certain circumstances, even 28,000 tons.

That is one of the main reasons why they complain of not having benefited from a rate increase proportionate to the expansion of tonnage. I am more particularly thinking of