

*Private Members' Business*

the Coast Guard is doing a great job out there and deserves our support.

This morning specifically at the legislative review committee of Bill C-21, an act to amend the Canada Shipping Act, we did discuss—and it just happened to come up as a matter of discussion—some of the current legislation that is in place. In fact the Canada Shipping Act controls the entrance of ships into our waters.

We do not allow just any leaky tub from around the world to come sailing into the Strait of Juan de Fuca. There are designated reportings of this. The Coast Guard is advised 24 hours in advance of ships coming into our harbours. We have a very good idea of what vessels are entering Canadian waters. In fact many of them are not allowed to enter Canadian waters unless they are fit.

I want to speak at this point about anchorage itself, because it was the main thrust of the hon. member's motion today, and to give a little background on the act of anchoring and what it means. I also want to examine the reasons for anchoring a ship and the purpose for designating an anchorage that may have escaped some of those watching or listening today.

We cannot escape the fact that anchoring is an everyday activity. It is an integral part of navigation. In simple terms, navigation can be explained as the practice or the art of moving from one place to another safely. In a nautical or marine sense this is the familiar practice of taking out one's sailboat for a day's sail in a local harbour and safely returning at the end of the day. An example that is more germane to the motion before the House is that it is also the practice of sailing a 200-metre ship loaded with perhaps 30,000 tonnes of goods halfway round the world in a safe and efficient manner.

As I just said anchoring is a part of navigation. Anchoring has a role in the efficiency and safety of proceeding from one place to another, although presumably when at anchor the ship is stopped and waiting to continue moving to its final destination.

Anchoring is most commonly seen as a method to hold the ship in position while it awaits a berth in a harbour to load or unload cargo. It is considered economically efficient and environmentally sensible because the consumption of fuel is reduced dramatically while at anchor.

It is also efficient in that the ship can generally be anchored close to the area where the loading or unloading will ultimately take place.

Anchoring is more significant when looked at from a safety point of view. A ship cannot be kept stationary without an anchor except those that are equipped with sophisticated engine controls and substantial power to overcome the effect of drifting due to wind and tide. Throwing out an anchor—and I use that as a figure of speech since a large ship's anchor and chain weighs several tonnes—simply keeps the ship from moving. A ship that is not moving or drifting is not in danger of grounding, colliding with another ship or subject to the stresses of the open sea. It really is a very safe way to wait before continuing on a trip.

Members may also be interested to note that a vessel at anchor must continue to be crewed as if it were under way. A navigation watch is maintained by certified navigation officers to ensure the ship's position is maintained, to watch other ship traffic in the area and to do whatever work is necessary to ensure the ship's safety.

In cases where the weather begins to deteriorate the practice of good seamanship dictates that engines are put on standby and are ready to move the ship should the anchors fail to hold. All these activities are consistent with safe navigation.

Some members might suggest that a ship could hold off in the open ocean, far off from more sensitive coastlines, until it can steam directly to port and not have to anchor. The recent tragedy off Nova Scotia illustrates the danger of exposing even the largest of ships to the rigours of the open ocean. The safety of crews, the rigours that the open sea inflicts upon them and the protection of the environment require that the practice of good seamanship be followed and ships reduce their exposure to the risks of the high seas and exposed coasts.

• (1725)

Ships anchored with proper care accorded by good seamanship are less likely to be involved in a collision or grounding than a ship in motion. In rare cases where a ship at anchor is dragged around by high winds or currents, the results can be much less severe than when a ship is moving under power and collides with another ship or runs aground.