

Controversy Seethes Over Ferryliner

A heated controversy erupted this week between Gov. Walter J. Hickel and Sen. E. L. (Bob) Bartlett over the purchase of a foreign ship *Stenna Britanica*, a Swedish ship, by the State of Alaska to add to the fleet of ferries on the marine highway system.

The almost new Swedish ferry, now named *M. V. Wickersham*, has been the bone of contention in regard to the Jones Act that prohibits the use of a foreign-built ship to operate between two American ports.

Gov. Hickel reacted vigorously to Sen. Bartlett's latest letter to the governor written on June 5.

Bartlett told Hickel that "this is the time for hard, cold facts. We do not now have those facts."

Bartlett was referring to 10 questions he asked the governor "which must be answered."

Gov. Hickel called on Sen. Bartlett to "show more concern for what is best for Alaska and Alaskans, and less for the influential lobbyists of the powerful U.S. shipbuilding industry—which has no shipyards in Alaska."

The governor reacted to the published reports about the Bartlett letter which he said he has not received up till last Tuesday.

"I am deeply concerned about the lack of understanding shown by Sen. Bartlett on the subject of the Jones Act," said Hickel.

"Over the years, Sen. Bartlett has continued to assure Alaska voters that he realizes that the Jones Act places a stranglehold on Alaska's development.

"And he has repeatedly assured us, at election time over the years, that he will work for a Jones Act amendment. Now we learn that his intentions are directly the opposite."

Hickel commented that it was inconceivable that a man who has been in Washington since 1936 is not familiar with the menace of this act to his home state.

The state has been seeking an amendment in the Jones Act or a waiver from its restriction which prohibits the use of a foreign-built vessel in trade between American ports.

An amendment, or a waiver,

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would allow ferry liner Wickersham to sail between American ports but the Jones Act would only allow it now to sail between Prince Rupert, a Canadian port, and Haines in Alaska.

In his June 5 letter to the governor, Sen. Bartlett said:

"If the amendment is to become law the state must present the facts of the matter—and its plans for the future—in a clear and straightforward manner. The Congress, the industry, and especially the people of Alaska have a right to know precisely what the state plans. Without such information—and we do not now have such information—the changes of congressional approval appear remote."

The senator then asked his ten questions.

In his reaction to the press reports about Bartlett's letter, Gov. Hickel said the state had furnished a draft of legislation to the senator on April 26 and a letter further explaining what was needed to be sent to Bartlett.

"Again on June 5," said Hickel, "I wrote to Sen. Bartlett asking that he and Sen. Gruening attempt to prevail on the administration in Washington to issue an executive or administrative order to give Alaska the help it so vitally needs.

"Now we read in the press that the senator apparently opposes amendment of the Jones Act, but his office remains mysteriously quiet about the recent news that the federal government has purchased two foreign ships for the U.S. Navy from the Upper Clyde shipyards in England."

The controversial ship, M.V. Wickersham, was reportedly purchased at a substantial saving by the state at the cost of around \$6 million.

In the meantime politicians, both Democrats and Republicans, have entered the controversy.