

*Canada Shipping Act*

country, and which ends up increasing the deficit by loading other costs on to the Consolidated Revenue Fund, particularly the cost of unemployment insurance and the loss of revenue, whether it be individual income tax or corporate income tax. Those particular dangers require careful calculation before one is ready to undertake anything of the sort the Minister is seeking authorization to do. Simply, it is very easy to undertake such measures as these for reasons which are a little more than ideological but are regarded as important matters of principle and, in the process, to act against the national interest of the country.

The Canadian nation was not built upon cost recovery. It was not built upon the expansion of market opportunities for their own sake. Surely it was built upon and found expression in policies designed to enlarge opportunities, frequently by putting costs on the Consolidated Revenue Fund and by carrying out investments which would be justified if the country were to be seen in over-all corporate terms. I am referring to social investments which made it possible for people to settle in the Canadian West and in that process improve the land, grow grain and find a market for it. For me, being from Thunder Bay, to talk about the importance of the western settlement, land improvement and wheat production, is simply to recognize the fact that the most important trade through the Port of Thunder Bay is the trade in grain. In 1984, the most important product which went through the Port was grain, for a total of 16.6 million metric tons. That total is evidence of the extent to which the Port of Thunder Bay is a junction between western grain growers and shippers on the Great Lakes moving grain toward domestic markets to the East, and, even more so, on the export markets beyond the North American continent.

If I compare the quantity of grain moved with the amount of coal which went through the port at 2.78 million metric tons, one has a real indication of the dominance of the grain trade in that port. Also it helps one to appreciate the way in which great terminal elevators dominate the lakeshore along the bay and provide the point of linkage between trains from the West and vessels from the East.

The importance of the grain trade is not only a matter of the business done in Thunder Bay. After last year's decline of 25 per cent from the preceding year, this year we have a further decline of 40 per cent in grain movement. For weeks and months during the summer-time practically nothing happened in the port and hundreds of elevator workers were laid off. Some were laid off for more than a year. They realized, as it went into the summer and continued into the fall, that it was unlikely they would be called back for the moment and perhaps never called back again. We have a daily experience with those circumstances. I visited the Port Arthur Shipbuilding company and talked with managers and workers there. I was told how very slow business was this year. When ships are not moving, they do not have the good fortune to move grain nor do they have the bad fortune for them, to rub bottom at various points and to suffer other minor damage which make it possible for that company to do its jobs in ship repair.

● (1550)

As a result, employment at the shipyards falls off sharply, and in one area after another the same is true. The Seafarers' International Union is talking in terms of 2,500 of its members not being at work this year, and both CN Rail and CP Rail have laid people off.

We are experiencing what can happen when factors go against an industry. Initially we were told that the decline in the grain crop in the West was to blame. However, we also have anxiety about the cost factors that make it less attractive to ship through the Port of Thunder Bay, thus leading to these effects in the Port of Thunder Bay and in ports all along the system, including the Port of Montréal and beyond.

At point after point the factors that slow the movement of grain and of other freight through the Great Lakes system have a serious effect on employment and business activities. It is for that reason, Mr. Speaker, that my colleague, the Hon. Member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan, and I feel, as I am sure others do, so deeply the necessity of asking the Minister of Transport, to reconsider Clause 4 of the Bill. Our desire is to prevent any possibility of additional costs being added to the use of the system.

The centennial of the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway is almost upon us, and in the case of the St. Lawrence Seaway we have a system that is nearing the 30-year mark now—which, incidentally, might underscore the damage suffered as a result of the collapse of part of the wall of a lock in the Welland Canal system, a point which was pursued briefly in Question Period earlier this afternoon. It is clear that we need not only to undertake every measure to reduce the costs on the system but to invest the money to ensure that the system is in first class condition.

We speak readily these days about things being "world class" and "state of the art," and so forth. Well, the canals on this system have been around for quite a while. The Welland Canal, of course, is rich in history, the first construction having taken place in the late 1820s, with a series of reconstructions and expansions following as one canal system has succeeded another.

I do not mean to suggest to the Minister that we need yet another Welland Canal built—although, given the size of vessels today, that is a topic that is perhaps worth thinking about. In recession circumstances, I do not suppose that the Minister wants to contemplate such a project. Nonetheless, Mr. Speaker, we have to ensure that the system is as efficient as it can be and that the costs to the carriers are kept down. Those are the important points that I wish to note critically about this Bill. Clause 4 presents some very dangerous prospects for the shippers, a perilous possibility for the Government to act upon.

Perhaps I could now say something about the second largest trade done through the Port of Thunder Bay, the trade in coal. The figures in respect of the trade in coal underscore the importance of keeping costs down to the various industries in Canada and in fact to Canadians generally, as I shall demon-