

Canada Shipping Act

4. To the knowledge of the government, is Mr. John Lakes Jr. a member of the firm Stein and Lakes and has he played an active role in the Progressive Conservative Party in British Columbia?

Return tabled.

[English]

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I hate to be a spoil sport on the last sitting day before our adjournment. However, I must ask the Parliamentary Secretary if and when the Government intends to reply to Question No. 313 standing in my name which I put on the Order Paper on March 28, 1985. I recognize that that question was put on the Order Paper prior to our new rules, which means that the Government may require slightly longer than 45 days to respond. However, I am sure that you, Sir, would recognize that a year and a half is much longer than 45 days. I ask the Parliamentary Secretary if he would now table this reply because I feel it is important.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to advise the Member that the Thirty-second Parliament answered 68.9 per cent of the questions asked. The Thirty-third Parliament has answered 86.6 per cent of the questions asked. That is our record. I will give this matter due attention and we will put all the troops to work on it over the summer.

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, I cannot miss this occasion. After a year and a half the Parliamentary Secretary has answered one of my questions today. I thank him very much.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA SHIPPING ACT AND RELATED ACTS

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed on Thursday, June 12, consideration of the motion of Mr. Mazankowski that Bill C-75, an Act to amend the Canada Shipping Act and to amend the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act, the Maritime Code Act and the Oil and Gas Production and Conservation Act in consequence thereof, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to resume the comments which I began 13 days ago in the House which were so rudely interrupted when I had barely begun to examine this Bill. I am pleased that the Government of Canada has such confidence in Bill C-75 and stands so proudly behind it that it has chosen, in its wisdom, to bring it before the House two hours and fifty-six minutes before the House rises for the summer recess.

If one were to listen to the Minister of Transport of Canada (Mr. Mazankowski), his Parliamentary Secretary and Conservative members of the Transport Committee serving in the Government of Canada, one would be led to believe by the power of their rhetoric that Bill C-75 is a sound Bill based on principles of fairness and equity which are proud to stand

behind. After listening to such comments one cannot help but wonder why, in the dying hours of the last day of the last week of the last month of this Parliament of Canada, the Government would bring forward this Bill which it says it is so proud to stand behind.

The tragedy of Bill C-75 is that it is fundamentally a sound Bill. The Canada Shipping Act has not been updated for decades. The Government wisely decided to update Bill C-75 to make it more relevant to the eighties. That decision was welcomed by everyone in the country who has any interest in Canada's shipping industry. It was welcomed because it made sense.

The public will wonder what the objection is to Bill C-75 as it has been presented to this Parliament. The objection is that above and beyond renewing and updating regulations pertaining to shipping the Government gave the Minister of Transport a brand new authority which has never before been seen in the history of the Shipping Act. That authority is contained in Clause 4. It is the equivalent of giving the Minister a gun and some ammunition without knowing who the Minister intends to shoot.

Clause 4 gives the Minister the power to impose charges or duties on shipping ranging from canoes to freighters which ply the Great Lakes. Such charges have heretofore never existed. Some members of the public are saying that it is not so unreasonable to apply charges for services provided by the Government of Canada. They do not appreciate that the authority which is being requested is a blank cheque. The Minister is asking Parliament to give him the authority to apply, at his whim, user charges to people in the shipping industry. However, in advance of being given this authority he will not tell us how much is to be raised, who the charges are to be applied to or what impact those charges will have on all these facets of Canada's shipping industry. He is asking for a blank cheque. He is asking Parliament to be deaf, dumb and blind, nothing more than a rubber stamp for the Minister of Transport and the Government. Those who have observed this Parliament with any degree of objectivity will know that the last thing it is—and it may be a lot of things, some good, some bad—is a rubber stamp for a Minister of the Crown.

• (1410)

Clause 4 of the Bill places an altogether festering sore on what otherwise would be a fairly sound Bill. That is the main objection I have to it. There is a secondary objection.

Mr. Skelly: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, can I get clarification from the Chair? Is the Hon. Member asking us to believe that this Parliament is acting just like the last Parliament under a Liberal Government with respect to being a rubber stamp?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair must say that this is not point of order.