

Canada Shipping Act

When members of my Party were making inquiries about this Bill, we heard some complaints indicating that the new Government has influenced the ports policy. I thought that the central Government was to have a hands-off policy, but apparently that is not so. In particular, the Conservative Government has changed leasing practices. As a result, there is considerable confusion and there have been delays. We of course had had enough of this under the old Liberal policy. I would ask the Minister to check into this matter and see that the Government will not leave the short-term subleasing to companies that are on the port rather than have them under the control of the port itself. Each company, of course, has a very special vested interest. We are particularly concerned that the use of all land around the port should be in the best interests of the entire community, including the residential communities surrounding the port.

The new board of the Port Corporation has been in place for some time now. It would seem to me that it is now time to review what is happening in the Port of Vancouver in view of these challenges from the South.

I would like to return to the question of dangerous goods. I would refer to a very significant report that was made in 1983 by a man called Joseph Marsten who was a federal public servant in marine planning and whose report entitled *Danger, Chemical Cargoes in Port*, illustrated many concerns that he had as a professional about the Port of Vancouver. I think that this report is relevant to this Bill which deals with hazardous products.

Mr. Marsten listed all of the very dangerous products that go through the Port of Vancouver including ethylene-dichloride which is a component of the plastics industry, chlorine which is used for the pulp and paper industry and is shipped up the coast, LPGs and propane exported to Japan for fuel and methanol which is used in the petrochemical and plastic industries and is also exported to Japan. He indicated that people do not realize the extent to which these products are present within the harbour and that assorted chemicals have come to Vancouver by rail and barge.

Because of Expo '86, we are pleased to see that there has been a recent move of the rail transfer of dangerous goods by land from downtown Vancouver to outside greater Vancouver itself. This is long overdue and my constituents are very grateful for this move.

I am sorry that I do not have more time to talk about its details, but the study to which I referred substantiates the fact that the standards in the Port of Vancouver are very low. Again, I would ask for an update on this report and I would ask for regulations in this Bill specifying in much greater detail the kind of safety measures that are needed. We need strong enforcement measures so that we are not living with the threat of dangerous cargo going through our ports.

Mr. Siddon: Mr. Speaker, I noted that the Hon. Member for Vancouver East (Ms. Mitchell) drew attention to the potential plight of the Port of Vancouver arising from the recently announced proposal to create a new port of entry at

Bellingham just immediately south of the Canadian border which would presumably allow offshore shipping companies to gain access to Canadian markets not through the Port of Vancouver but through a nearby port operating under United States jurisdiction. The Hon. Member made reference to the fact that this proposed American port would operate as a free port or an economic free zone of some sort.

Perhaps I might ask the Hon. Member if she and other members of the New Democratic Party believe in the concept of a free port or an economic free zone. Second, perhaps the Hon. Member could explain why it is that this proposed U.S. port which I agree will represent a considerable threat to West Coast Shipping interests and the Port of Vancouver would indeed pose a threat. In other words, does she feel that it will operate at a lower cost per unit volume of commodities shipped than the Port of Vancouver? If so, why would the cost be so much lower in this nearby port? How does she feel the proposed Bill and the amendment to the Bill proposed by the Hon. Member for Egmont (Mr. Henderson) will affect this competitive situation?

Ms. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, as the Minister knows only too well, I am a Member of Parliament from the riding of Vancouver East and the new Democratic critic for social policy and women's issues. The matter before us is not directly related to those areas for which I am my Party's critic.

● (1650)

If I may digress for a moment, I meant to say that the Bill has sexist language in it and we will have to change that. That is a Conservative approach to such matters.

Getting back to the field of shipping, in which I am not an expert, I know what the Minister is getting at. I also know that he supports the Social Credit Government of British Columbia which is why he asks this underhanded question.

Mr. Siddon: It is a fair question.

Ms. Mitchell: He wants the type of free economic zones in British Columbia which would give the freedom to exploit workers and women and do away with unions. The high-tech field, which he is supposed to be in charge of, is one of the worst fields for doing that. If he is looking at this situation as a model for his Ministry, then I say that he is in for a great deal of trouble in British Columbia. I think that is really what he is aiming at.

Mr. Siddon: Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Hon. Member has either not heard my questions clearly or she has misunderstood them. I was not making any statement as to my own disposition with respect to the question of an economic free zone concept or the free port concept. However, I noted in the announcement of this new and potentially damaging initiative in Washington State that it was claimed that it would allow commodities to enter Canada on a much lower per unit cost basis and that these goods would be delivered to market areas, presumably in eastern Canada, by way of entry through Washington State. I asked the Hon. Member if she had some