

Canada Shipping Act

provide a collective voice for the eight Great Lakes States on water resources and related issues, would be remiss if it did not express opposition to the current language of Bill C-75.

The Commission has monitored the progress of Bill C-75 in Parliament, has participated in regional discussions about potential impacts, the Coast Guard cost recovery provision, Clause 4. Commission testimony was presented to the Legislative Committee in Ottawa on February 13, 1986."

The Commission emphasized: "—four points believed to be necessary before a navigation cost recovery legislation can be successfully implemented. (1) federal user fees should be uniform in application from seaport to seaport and from coastal range to coastal range. Uniformity maintains the current competitive relationship amongst ports."

Concern number one is not met in this Bill. It continues: "(2) there must be a clear determination of the purpose for which fees are to be collected and the activities to which they are to be applied. This is critical to the ultimate acceptability of any system adopted."

Point number two is not met because the Minister is not going to tell anybody in advance of getting the authority to raise these fees, how much is to be raised, who is to be targeted, for how long fees are to be raised and at what rate they are to be raised.

It is the equivalent to giving a rogue a gun and a bullet without first assuring yourself that he is not going to point the gun and the bullet at you and do you great harm. The Government of Canada has raised up the barrel, has raised up the gun, has looked down the barrel, is squeezing the trigger and the bullet that it is going to use to do great damage to the Canadian shipping industry is this Bill. However, we will not give the Government the ammunition today. It will pull the trigger, only to find that it is firing blanks because we in the Opposition will not provide the Government with the ammunition that it seeks to do grave damage to the people of this country.

● (1600)

The Great Lakes Commission goes on to say that any user-fee proposal should involve thorough public consultation with all user groups, which should take place before initial application of fees and before any subsequent changes in the level of fees.

Mr. Boudria: Was that done?

Mr. Tobin: That was not done. In fact, every group has complained that they had no consultation prior to the introduction of Clause 4 in Bill C-75. The Great Lakes Commission is responsible, along with our authority, the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority, for managing the Seaway. That Commission wrote the Prime Minister in a desperate bid, after having gone through all other channels.

The Great Lakes Commission is saying that they have managed to co-operate successfully with the St. Lawrence

Seaway Authority to jointly manage the St. Lawrence Seaway, so why can they not co-operate in a joint fashion in the establishment of new fees? I find it strange, indeed ironic, that if the Government cannot keep its act together with respect to the St. Lawrence Seaway that has been successfully managed jointly with the Americans for 30 years, how can Canadians believe that the Government is competent or capable of negotiating a comprehensive free trade agreement with implications that are much more profound than those in Clause 4 of this Bill?

It strains Canadians' belief in the credibility of the Government that it can negotiate a comprehensive free trade agreement when it cannot even deal with the joint management of the St. Lawrence Seaway.

I want to bring to the attention of Canadians and Members of Parliament a second letter that was written to Canada's Ambassador, Allan Gotlieb. The letter states: "Dear Mr. Ambassador: We wish to thank you for your recent letter concerning legislative action in Clause 4 of Bill C-75, currently pending before the Canadian Parliament. It was reassuring for us to learn that Bill C-75 was before a special legislative committee of Parliament for detailed analysis, that the Minister of Transport would be establishing a committee to consider the views of all affected parties prior to any decision to implement Coast Guard user fees." Those people were falsely reassured because I was part of that special legislative committee and, despite the words of wisdom that were ushered in from every part of Canada in opposition to Clause 4, it is still retained in the legislation.

Mr. Nunziata: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. As you know, there are a precious 55 minutes left in this particular debate. I know that the Hon. Member for Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe (Mr. Tobin) is not yet half way through his submissions with respect to this legislation, specifically with regard to Clause 4. Once again, might there be unanimous consent in the House to permit me at this point to ask some questions of the Hon. Member for Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe?

Some Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There is not unanimous consent. Debate. The Hon. Member for Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe (Mr. Tobin).

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, again, Members opposite who profess to be ready and willing to stand on their feet only in the event that I shut up so this Bill can pass, do not have the courage or backbone to stand up and defend their silence. It is a strange place indeed, when the only time those Members opposite will be able to find their legs is to make a direct dart for the exit as they rush off on their holidays, having wreaked havoc on the Canadian shipping industry.

As I was saying, before my colleague, the Member for York South—Weston (Mr. Nunziata), attempted to put such a sensible suggestion before the House, the Great Lakes