

Government Orders

With those brief words, because I know the House has much work to be completed before 7 p.m., we give this bill its blessing at this stage. We look forward to crossing the *t*'s and dotting the *i*'s at committee where, on behalf of the Liberal Party, I will raise a number of thoughts to be further amplified at that time.

Mr. Rod Laporte (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take this opportunity to make a few brief remarks with respect to this bill. Bill C-82 is a bill which touches on a topic that should be a matter of thorough public scrutiny, and that is the accountability of our ports.

Canada is, after all, a trading nation and, with so much of our economic health riding on trade, our country's ports assume a special importance. Too often, their operations are shrouded in secrecy. Some pretty questionable activities are carried on under that shroud. Lifting that veil, ensuring the fullest transparency that can be practically attained in a competitive environment, should be a key goal of any administration genuinely committed to open government.

The legislation is acceptable to my New Democratic colleagues and, as far as it goes, it is a good bill. There are aspects of it that we find particularly worthy of support. It allows for public input through notification in the *Canada Gazette*. It keeps ultimate authority in the hands of the government and port wardens who must still submit annual independent audits to the government.

In a narrow sense the legislation is aimed at accountability, accountability to market forces and the shipping industry. That is good, because there are other areas where accountability is sorely needed.

Canada's ports are exempt from access to information requirements. Supposedly, this is to protect the competitive position of the ports. Perhaps it is also to save the government and its pals from embarrassment.

Earlier this year we had a glimpse of the kind of excess, exorbitance and extravagance that hides behind this mask, revealed by the Leader of my party, the member for Yukon, along with *The Globe and Mail*.

The manager of the Port of Montreal earns some \$130,000 a year. Perhaps that is not entirely out of line, but look at last year's perks as reported in *The Globe and Mail* earlier this year: the use of two drivers and two cars;

an annual allowance of \$6,600 for his own car; a \$15,000 membership at the Mount Royal Golf Club; two season's tickets to the Montreal Canadiens games, plus play-off tickets; and four season's tickets to the Expos, at a cost of \$6,857. Also, he had 10 tickets at \$500 each to a gala concert of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra.

In 1988, the corporation's entertainment budget was over \$327,000, twice the amount of 1985. There was almost \$11,000 for a party at the Westin and over \$42,000 for liquor, flowers, cigars and a category called "other". The port spent over \$63,000 in gourmet catering for parties on board the *Maisonneuve*, officially a port tugboat but whose real use is entertaining. That's entertainment, Mr. Speaker. That is also unquestionable waste.

What was the explanation for this? It was indicated that those galas and baseball games are hard work. It has been explained by the manager of the port corporation that reports of lavish expenditures come from envious blue-collar workers.

Let me recite his exact words from *The Globe and Mail* article:

The clerks are mad because they haven't been invited on the boat. If it bugs people, let them be bugged.

After having said that the port has to entertain if it is to compete, he concludes by saying:

And those turkeys have the gall to complain.

• (1750)

That attitude, Mr. Speaker, provides new insight into the poisoned labour relations atmosphere at the port. No wonder.

Those turkeys are working people. Like Canadians everywhere, they have not seen their entertainment budget double in the past four years. They have seen services from the government slashed. They have seen post offices closed, the CBC savaged, VIA Rail gutted, and the GST looming on the horizon.

No, Mr. Speaker, workers have not been invited on the boat. They are right to be mad, because the government's belief in restraint and cutbacks ends when it comes to the life-styles to which their cronies have become accustomed.

We need answers. We need accountability, and we need openness. We need to be able to unravel situations like the one that rose in 1984 when the port hired