

Canada Shipping Act

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the Hon. Member. I know that he is sincerely concerned about some of the difficulties to which he alluded in respect of potato producers and fishermen. I can assure him that the comments coming from that side of the House are not going unnoticed.

● (1530)

The Hon. Member indicated that he felt there was a need for more ice-breaking services and perhaps that is true. Currently, something in the order of \$180 million is spent annually on ice-breaking services for which there is no cost recovery. Is the Hon. Member saying that these kinds of ice-breaking services should be provided absolutely free even to foreign vessels escorted by Canadian icebreakers? Is that really the position of the Hon. Member's Party?

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the question put by the Minister. I moved this amendment so I can get some clarification on what the Government is trying to do. What I am trying to say is that the potato industry on Prince Edward Island is in competition with the State of Maine which has ice-free harbours year round. Indeed, the Province of Prince Edward Island is in competition with the Province of New Brunswick, the producers of which can ship out of Saint John harbour because it is basically ice-free and does not need ice-breaking services. If we are to compete and maintain the industry, there must be some form of equalization. The Government must recognize the geographic realities of our country. Therefore, ice-breaking services in Labrador, the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the Northumberland Straits are imperative, even if they are for a foreign vessel which is picking up a product from Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland or New Brunswick. I think that the Government and this legislation does not recognize the uniqueness of certain parts of Atlantic Canada and certain parts of the North. That is all I am trying to say. This Bill puts the agricultural community of Prince Edward Island at a total disadvantage at a time when, heaven knows, it does not need to be at any further disadvantage.

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, with respect, the Hon. Member skated around the question. Is he saying that it is the position of his Party that ice-breaking services, in all cases, whether it be for a Canadian vessel or a foreign vessel, should be provided absolutely free of charge?

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, I did not skate around the question. I think the Minister is trying to throw a red herring in here. I tried to indicate to the Minister that not all foreign vessels in Canadian waters are there for the total benefit of that foreign country. The Minister knows that Canada has no merchant fleet and we have to rely on foreign vessels to take our product out of the country for export purposes. As well, some oil tankers are not registered in Canada but have to come into certain ports and harbours to bring in oil supplies. If these tankers had to pay for ice-breaking services, would that cost not be added on to the cost of the product? This Government is supposed to be a business-oriented Government. It would be

foolhardy, I would think, for any Member of this House to decide that a foreign vessel should operate in Canadian waters at a deficit.

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to prolong this, but I think the Hon. Member knows that all forms of transportation are subsidized and have some measure of cost recovery. In the case of the marine sector, we are talking about something like \$824 million being spent annually providing navigational, ice-breaking and other related services while cost recovery is something in the order of 2.5 per cent. Does the Hon. Member think that this is fair?

We are hearing from Members on the other side that we should treat all modes of transportation fairly. The air and rail modes are recovering a much larger percentage of their costs than the marine mode which literally recovers nothing whatsoever. It seems to me that that is somewhat unfair.

The Hon. Member should not try for one minute to suggest that this Bill is proposing 100 per cent cost recovery. I wish Hon. Members of the opposite side would not take this to the extreme. There is flexibility in this Bill. We are committed to discussing areas for which there could be some reasonable cost recovery, which may very well in turn generate some efficiencies within the system. To suggest that we are talking about 100 per cent cost recovery for the provision of these services is really exaggerating the point to the extreme.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, this is the first little titbit of information I have received. At least we now know that there will not be 100 per cent cost recovery. Will the Minister rise in his place today to tell us just exactly what that cost recovery will be? We now know that it will not be 100 per cent. Will it be 99 per cent, 80 per cent, 60 per cent, 50 per cent or 5 per cent? These are the things we want to know. We are not buying a pig in a poke and we will not sign a blank cheque for this Minister or any other Minister. I do not think that the Hon. Minister would expect us to do so. We have to represent our constituents in a faithful manner. We have to be honest with them so we have to know, when people ask me what it will cost them to ship their potatoes next year, what the Government's intentions are.

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, I rise to make an observation. It is incredible to listen to the Minister of Transport compare the charges contained in this Bill with charges for the air mode and other modes of transportation. I would like to point out to the Minister that we are not talking about transportation of people. We are not talking about ships that intend to ply their way down south for a winter vacation. We are talking about transportation that is a necessity, not a choice. The people to whom we are referring do not have any choice. Either they go by boat or they do not go. The Minister's analogy is absolutely ridiculous.

The Minister has stuck in this thing about foreigners. He has said that we should not let foreigners get away with anything. Do we see anything in this Bill that talks about foreigners? There is nothing there at all. If the Minister means