

Canada Shipping Act

I listened yesterday to one of my colleagues who made a point, perhaps a little facetiously but nevertheless a valid one. The imposition of a user fee for Coast Guard use is a little bit like imposing the user fee for calling the police or the fire department. If you stop to think about it, it is ludicrous. It would be outrageous if we were to start now to impose user fees if you happen to need the assistance of the police. What if you made the call and they came, stood at your door and said: "We will give you a hand but there is a user fee". That would be ridiculous. I do not think anyone would contemplate it.

Mr. Rodriguez: What happens if you say you can't afford it?

Mr. Deans: As my colleague suggests, if you say you can't afford it, they won't give you help. I do not know whether that would be the case or not, but no one would ever contemplate such a stupid thing, not even Conservatives. Yet that is what is being suggested. We are suggesting that the police on the water can charge you for calling for their assistance while the police on the land in similar circumstances do not, and would never consider it.

I suggest that, if for no other reason than the reason I mentioned, this particular part of this Bill should be withdrawn. We should try to get some sanity into the debate and some understanding of the potential consequences. This is not a big item, this is not an item that requires a great deal of deliberation or something the Government requires to keep the coffers full. This will not make substantial difference to the over-all fiscal or financial affairs of the country, but it will make a difference in my judgment, and my judgment is based on experience of what the likely consequences will be with regard to safety on the waters of Canada that are currently under the jurisdiction of the Coast Guard. I ask that the Government withdraw this part of the Bill, show some common sense and recognize the potential hazard it is about to create.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Tardif (Richmond—Wolfe): Mr. Speaker, I also welcome this opportunity to take part in the debate on Bill C-75.

I may say, Mr. Speaker, that although this is a subject that does not directly concern my riding, I have been listening to the debate in the House for some time, and I think a few comments are in order.

Bill C-75 bears the following title: "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."

Mr. Speaker, upon reading this Bill, I think we cannot but agree, and support most if not all of the provisions of this legislation. When it is a matter of improving safety and protecting the environment, and when provision is made to update the Canada Shipping Act, and finally, the reference to

implementing a whole series of international conventions within a reasonable timeframe, I think it stands to reason that we should agree with the objectives and goals and in fact with everything provided under Bill C-75.

However, Mr. Speaker, there is Clause 4, and I think this is the basic and main reason why so many Members have reacted to this Bill. Whether or not we are affected by the consequences or impact of this Bill, I feel that after a careful look at the provisions of Clause 4, we have a duty to rise and protest most emphatically against a provision that I see as an insult to democracy, as a totally undemocratic gesture, as a weapon the Minister wants to keep in reserve in order to have absolute control over this very important sector. I think the amendments could have been approved so that this institution, so that we as Members of Parliament, in our democratic system, would be involved in a review or any future changes concerning the fee schedule.

When I decided to speak on this matter, Mr. Speaker, I tried to get hold of some testimony, some briefs that were presented when the Bill was considered in Committee, and in my humble opinion, the one I have here, that was presented by the *Association des opérateurs de navires du Saint-Laurent* clearly and succinctly identifies the problem and the dramatic and extremely tragic consequences of the provisions of Clause 4. For instance, we can read the following on page 2 of the brief presented by the *Association des opérateurs de navires du Saint-Laurent* on January 29, 1986: We reached the following conclusion. We agree with most of the provisions of this Bill—and that is exactly what my colleagues have been saying in the House—but there is one major objection concerning Clause 4: it should be the subject of legislation after due consultation with the interested parties, not before as is the case now.

Still at the bottom of page 2, they go on to say this: However, we think that Clause 4 should not have been smuggled in with the Bill, and such a radical change in the operations of the Coast Guard should not have been made without first discussing the matter with the interested parties. What stands out most in this exercise is the antidemocratic approach, so these people went to the trouble of raising a series of questions about Clause 4.

Just to show that my remarks are relevant, Mr. Speaker, with your permission I should like to mention some of the questions raised about Clause 4. For example, they ask: Which services will have to be paid for? Will it be navigational aids? Will it be environmental protection, dredging, de-icing, training schools, search and rescue operations, or all such services as a whole? On what criteria will operations be based? Will it be tonnage, the value of the goods, the size of the ship, the number of times a ship crosses imaginary lines in the Great Lakes, the St. Lawrence River, or the Arctic gulf? When he was queried about this, the Minister of Transport (Mr. Mazankowski) said that his department planned to recover 15 per cent of the costs. Does that mean costs across Canada? In other words, will each area have to cover a specified percentage