

Government Orders

made until the time the licence is granted could be as little as 14 days or two weeks.

Our submission is that where there is absolutely no waiting period required in order to obtain a licence to engage in the coastal trade, the result inevitably can be the elimination of a Canadian coastal shipping operation altogether.

What has happened in many cases—and some of these cases were presented to us in committee—is that we have such a tight, cosy network engaged in the granting of these licences that shippers can arrange their affairs, if they wish to do business with a foreign ship, to ensure that their request is presented in such a way or goes in at such a time that no Canadian vessel can be obtained. Even though an appropriate Canadian vessel does exist, it may be otherwise engaged or it may be in other waters.

A very short waiting period of 14 days such as is suggested in this amendment creates what might be called an economic vacuum into which Canadian vessels can become available, already being suitable, in order to engage in this trade with no waiting period whatsoever. Ultimately what can happen is the collapse of that period and the request for the licence and the issuance of the licence become so immediate that there is indeed no reason to have Canadian vessels in order to ply the trade. There is no delay. There is no disadvantage whatsoever to shippers if they can request and immediately receive a licence.

All we are asking the government to do with this amendment is to put a very small obstacle in the way of obtaining these licences. In what other business would we be so open to foreign concerns coming in and providing service within Canada, with non-Canadians, other than this one? We are not talking here about international trade. We are talking about coastal shipping between Canadian ports. We are also not endeavouring to talk in any way about cruises or about passengers. We are talking about the transport of goods between points on the Canadian coastline. We are merely suggesting that 14 days is not too long to wait to ensure that a Canadian vessel with a Canadian crew is not available to carry out that trade.

• (1050)

In short, it seems to us to be a very reasonable and very minor reform to an act which as I say is intended by its scheme, by its objects, to preserve to Canadian vessels the Canadian coastal trade and yet creates within itself a

very large loophole through which even the largest foreign vessel can easily cruise.

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a brief intervention. I want to say that I support the principle of the member's amendment.

Certainly during committee consideration we heard a number of concerns raised about questionable tactics by companies that also own ships of foreign registry. They would decide at the last minute that they had 100,000 tonnes of bunker oil ready to move and, lo and behold, they did not have time to go and find another ship so they brought in one of their ships from offshore. It met the qualifications and they got away without having any duties to pay.

I think the member's amendment makes sense. I like the concept of a registry, of requiring some initiative on behalf of Canadian carriers to record their names and the types of ships available, perhaps even as far as when those ships may be available because obviously they know their season, when the regular workload will occur, within reason. These days grain ships are never sure if they are going to work at all on the Great Lakes and out through the east coast. Certainly in other industries, particularly with specialized cargoes such as tankers, they have a good indication.

I have one concern about the wording of the amendment. The time period I agree with, the 10 days plus the 3, but using the mails perhaps is not the safest way these days. It does not specify priority post or any of the quicker ones. Obviously that would be an option for the agency or for the minister. Probably what would make more sense is a new marine bulletin board which is in existence. It is an on line data base, kind of like the electronic mail we have on the Hill in our constituency offices. It is available to all of the marine sector, at least on the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River. That would be an ideal place for this information to be recorded and an opportunity for almost instantaneous response by the industry to say: "Hey, I have a ship. I can position that ship at dock *x* three days from now. I want a chance at that work. I do not want it being given out to a company that probably was Canadian, maybe Canadian-owned, but for reasons of dodging the Minister of National Revenue has been reflagged to the Bahamas or wherever in order to avoid Canadian taxation, in order to avoid Canadian labour laws, certainly wage standard laws because they bring in a crew at \$100 a month or less to operate their ship and undercut Canadian jobs, Canadian workers and Canadian taxpayers".