

Coasting Trade and Commercial Marine Activities Act

That can be changed, however. We will assist this Bill to move on to committee so these things can be examined in detail.

Something else that is important is the question of treatment by the Government of the marine industries. Items of safety were put into the Canada Shipping Act, but with respect to the cost recovery program, and I think that in opening up this Bill with the coasting trade and allowing it to move to committee, we should begin to look at the Government's treatment of marine industries. We should be encouraging that infrastructure and assisting people who operate coasting vessels to supply small communities. I would take as an example a community such as Bella Bella on the coast of British Columbia which my colleague, the Hon. Member for Cariboo—Chilcotin (Mr. Greenaway) knows well. He is from the central coast, a native of the area, a person who has demonstrated serious concern over the years. The outfit that services the coasting operation which services that community has been hampered by extremely large cost-recovery programs which are going to continue to increase. All that does is to harm the communities such as Bella Bella. All that essentially comes out of that kind of short-sighted cost-recovery program is that the cost of living in Bella Bella and other communities, which was inordinately high to begin with, becomes even worse.

What I probably should have at this point to show the direction is a short note giving an indication of intention. However, what we have is something that involves the safety of the operation of coasting vessels. When we go to committee I, for one, will be raising the issue of lighthouses on the coast of British Columbia. For short-sighted cost-recovery and the desire to cut out public servants, the Government is going to shut down a number of lighthouses in the sense that the operators will be removed. Mark my words, this is going to be a loss in the safety of operation on the coast of British Columbia. This is going to create a situation where the available information to mariners will be limited.

The short-sighted attitude that a lighthouse in this day and age of modern technology is simply a light and a horn is absolutely wrong. It is an important part of weather information. It is an important part of communication. It is an important part of search and rescue and, indeed, it has become an integral part of the operation of marine and air safety on the coast of British Columbia. The Government's intention to shut those lighthouses down, to remove the operators and put in an automated process with which we will only gain a light that works some of the time and a foghorn which works some of the time, reminds me to a large degree of the front bench of the Conservative Party. It is of very limited use to anyone and certainly a detriment to the safety of Canadians.

In conclusion, I would like to deal with the area of sovereignty in the north and what that has to do with the coasting trade. What we are concerned about is the idea of putting nuclear submarines under the icecap. Someone suggested that the Cabinet had been smoking its running shoes the day it came up with that decision. What we have is a situation that is completely irrational, if in fact we were looking at developing

Canadian communities and assisting Canadian companies to operate in the north. We have Americans and international operations there, but restricting that operation strictly to northern Canada, would certainly be far ahead of providing the nuclear submarine idea to northern Canada. The construction of ice-breakers, the development and retaining in Canada of the ice-hardened hull and the ice-breaker technology is an absolute must.

● (1700)

We have a situation in which the Government could launch Canadians on a path of critical stupidity with respect to the nuclear submarine issue. At the same time we have a golden opportunity, if the Government is willing to expend that much capital on something that will provide absolutely no benefit to Canada, no benefit to the security of Canada, North America, or to the world, to expend it in marine technology, shipbuilding and securing the communities that are based on shipbuilding. This would give us tremendous benefits.

I suggest that the Government should not only not follow the destructive path that the Liberal Government took in previous years but, indeed, it must fulfil the promises which made sense, the promises of the 1984 election campaign. It recognized the flaws of the previous Government. It was aware of what was required by the shipbuilding industries, the people who worked in that industry and the communities which depended on it. It was keenly aware of this and made the appropriate promises. Three years have now passed and nothing has happened—absolutely nothing.

When this legislation goes before committee those groups which depend on the coasting trade, shipbuilding, the deep sea fleet and the development of northern transportation in northern communities must be allowed to come before the committee, not only to provide the information that the committee needs to bring this Bill up to speed but to hear from government Members on the committee why their promises have not been kept to date. They must be told why the proposed exceptions in the Bill today are being allowed to continue, to continue the negative, wrong-headed policy of the previous Liberal Government. That has to be explained. My colleague, the Hon. Member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan (Mr. Angus), nods his head in agreement, as does the Hon. Member for Simcoe North (Mr. Lewis), who is an intelligent and perceptive individual. As his head drops off to the side, he says that it is this kind of a nod. That was his standard procedure in the House for many years. But I notice that his interest picked up when the shipbuilding subject came up.

This is a critical and serious subject. I for one will be participating in the deliberations of the committee. Other colleagues here today wish to speak further on the matter. I am prepared at this point to relinquish the floor to hear others.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there questions or comments? The Hon. Member for Scarborough East (Mr. Hicks).