

Canada Shipping Act

required to be performed in the regulations. It is not the Coast Guard's responsibility to go into harbours. It is not the Coast Guard's written responsibility. It is not the Coast Guard's written responsibility to provide back-up for ferry systems to islands off the coast of Canada and off the coast of Newfoundland, but the Coast Guard does it as a matter of course. With the restrictions being placed on the coast Guard by this Government and by the President of the Treasury Board and now by this Bill, a lot of these services will disappear.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any questions and comments? There being no questions and comments, we will resume debate. The Hon. Member for Vancouver East (Ms. Mitchell).

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have a chance to speak briefly to the legislation before us. I have a particular interest whenever there is legislation relating to shipping because the Port of Vancouver is surrounded by my riding, that of Vancouver East. Many people in Vancouver East earn their livelihood in port, shipping or fishing related activities.

I want to concentrate on the aspects of this Bill that appear to have some real implications for the people of B.C. We have heard many speakers talking about the East and the Seaway area. I would like to concentrate on some of the aspects of the Bill that may, and I underline "may", have an implication for those in British Columbia. I say "may" because this Bill is pretty vague. It is heard to know exactly what the impact will be. It is enabling legislation which in some ways is good, but for some areas like the St. Lawrence Seaway, as my colleagues have pointed out, it could spell real disaster. Perhaps certain sections need to have more specifics and more teeth added.

Many aspects of the Bill, we feel, are a step in the right direction, although we would have liked to have seen policies spelled out in more detail.

● (1630)

It is a change from the deregulation policy of the Progressive Conservative Party and also of the Liberal Party. This Bill seems to provide opportunity for more regulation rather than for deregulation, which seems to be the transportation policy of the Government for all modes of transportation.

Mr. Forrestall: Better regulation.

Ms. Mitchell: We hope it will be better regulation, but not necessarily. That is one point we want clarified and made more specific. I am glad to see that it at least provides for some regulation regarding the impact of hazardous products carried by shipping vessels. However, we would have liked these measures spelled out more specifically.

I have a particular concern about this matter, as do people living around the Port of Vancouver. We live within an area which is faced with a very explosive situation on land, at sea and sometimes in the air where there are major transfers of goods, some of which are very dangerous products. We would have liked the safety measures spelled out in more detail. I

appeal to the Minister to look at the matter and to give us more assurances that there will be a review of the safety provisions or the lack thereof, and that there will be changes to tighten up the protections.

The Bill enables the Governor in Council to make regulations to ensure public safety, but few details are spelled out. Safety in terms of the transportation of dangerous cargoes is a very major concern, as I have said, in the Port of Vancouver. I should like to mention one example of this. Two or three times a year there is a Japan-bound ship which goes quietly through the Port of Vancouver, with its hold full of liquid petroleum gas. It is a 40,000 tonne tanker and it carries highly explosive propane. It goes under the second narrowest bridge where there is a lot of shipping. When people take a good look at this situation, they realize that it is a very explosive and dangerous one, but it is only one of many vessels which carry dangerous goods.

Apparently there has been no consultation with concerned groups in the development of this piece of legislation. The Government spent most of last year talking about how it intended to consult with all affected groups before making changes and bringing in new legislation. Yet every time we look at a piece of legislation, it seems that there has been no consultation with the groups directly affected. We are sincere about wanting to know what people around the Port of Vancouver think about the Bill. We telephoned fishing vessel owners, and they had not heard that there was a Bill. They were very surprised, very concerned and wanted to know what was in it. Also we telephoned the fishermen's union, and we were told the same thing. We telephoned the ILWU, the longshoremen's union, and it had not heard about the Bill. Of course, many of its members are unemployed; approximately 2,000 of its casuals are unable to obtain work. It wanted to know immediately what impact the Bill would have upon shipping costs and its eventual impact on the jobs of its members. We also telephoned the office of the Mayor of Vancouver which has a special economic committee that is very concerned about shipping and shipping-related matters. They did not know anything about the Bill. In addition we telephoned the Vancouver Waterfront Coalition. I think this coalition is a good development. It includes most community groups representing neighbourhoods along the Vancouver side of the port. It also includes all maritime unions. It is a very strong coalition. It has been looking at all aspects of the port, particularly its impact upon surrounding communities and jobs. That coalition had not heard anything; it had not heard a word about the Bill. Why was it not consulted? Also we contacted the Pacific Coast Maritime Council, a council of all maritime unions concerned with all of British Columbia, not just the Vancouver area. It had not heard about it. Even some of the officials at the Port of Vancouver whom we contacted did not know that the Bill was being brought forward. What kind of consultation is this? Surely it is important to let these groups know that a Bill is coming forward. Hopefully it makes sense to have these groups involved in consultations both before the Bill is brought in and when it is before committee.