

*Canada Shipping Act*

Is it any wonder that Clause 4 of this Bill has received an overwhelming negative response from almost every single group, except for the Minister himself who has appeared before the legislative committee that examined the whole matter? What did the PEI Potato Marketing Board say about this Bill? It said "Cost recovery will further erode the PEI potato producers in reaching central Canadian markets".

This further erodes the potato farmer's position.

How many Canadians are aware that in PEI today it costs potato farmers more to grow potatoes per pound than what they get per pound when they sell them? Potato farmers are already operating at a deficit. On top of that deficit, along comes the Hercules with video equipment flying the Prime Minister of Canada who is saying "We have Clause 4 of C-75 to load on to your backs".

● (1320)

In 1986, just before the election, Mr. Lee, the former Premier, said: "If ice-breaking charges for shipping potatoes are added, we could be blown off the map as far as competition is concerned". Those were very prophetic words. The Premier said that if those charges were applied, they could be blown off the map. The first one blown off the map was Premier Lee. There was an election in P.E.I. only a few months ago. The election was held in the middle of the examination of this Bill in the standing committee. The potato farmers of P.E.I. were telling the Government of Canada not to apply those charges because they would go bankrupt. The Premier of P.E.I. agreed but said that those guys in Ottawa are good guys and that the Prime Minister and he were good friends.

The Premier's words were prophetic. He said that if ice-breaking charges for shipping potatoes were added they could be blown off the map as far as being competitive is concerned. The Premier was the first victim. He was no longer competitive and was blown off the electoral map. He lost his own seat and lost the election. There is now a new Premier in the Province of P.E.I., Premier Ghiz.

The cost is not only to ordinary Canadians, fishermen, farmers, and employees of the shipping lines which ply the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence Seaway. The cost of the Government's policy also applies to its political friends. The former Premier of P.E.I., the Leader of the Conservative Party of P.E.I., is no more. I understand that his only potential for future involvement in political life is to find a seat in the Senate if the Prime Minister finds that he has indeed paid a high price for his allegiance, loyalty to and association with the high-flying, high-spending ways of this country's Prime Minister.

I see that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) has come into the House. If he were not bound by cabinet solidarity and an oath of office which says that he cannot criticize the policy of another Minister, if his job would not be put on the line and his head removed from his shoulders for making a comment to

the contrary, he would be standing in his place today defending the potato farmers of P.E.I. because he knows they are in very serious difficulty. It is only the Minister of Agriculture's oath of office and commitment to toe the line and not break ranks under threat of losing his job that prevents him from throwing down his coffee cup, rushing through the curtains, taking his place and demanding the floor to oppose the dastardly measure which is being imposed upon the farmers of the country by the vicious, cruel, heartless, senseless and stupid provisions of Clause 4 of Bill C-75.

We understand that Ministers would be fired if they spoke out. However, why is it that all the other members of the Conservative Party have not found their tongues? That is the puzzling thing, Mr. Speaker. Can it be that the several hundreds of representations have only been heard by the Opposition? Can it be that only the New Democratic and Liberal Parties are receiving these letters? Can it be that only we are hearing what is being said in the legislative committee? I do not believe that, Mr. Speaker. I think Members opposite have got the message as well but have not made the choice to rise to their feet and be heard.

The Great Lakes Commission is our co-partner in managing the St. Lawrence Seaway. It is the spokesman for the American states involved. At the annual meeting in Ann Arbor, Michigan, it was said: "If user fees are established for the use of Canadian federal navigation facilities, consideration should be given to the elimination of all Seaway tolls". The Government has gone in the opposite direction. It has raised tolls on the Welland Canal.

They went on to say: "When user fees are implemented, some current business is always lost and some new business would then have to be developed. It is our clear preference, based on our own experience with the U.S. government agencies, that the limits of authority be spelled out in legislative language in the original Bill rather than being left to administrative agencies of the Government for final determination". That is a crucial representation. It is their preference that the limits of authority be spelled out in legislative language in the original Bill rather than being left to administrative agencies of the Government for final determination.

They are saying that if the Minister must have this ability to raise fees and charge user fees, then let the Minister tell all users of Government services in advance what those fees are going to be. Let the Minister not expect to have a loaded shotgun in his hand and tell us later on whom that gun is targeted.

The St. Lawrence River Economic Development Group said: "We think it would be dangerous to pass Clause 4 until the main parties involved are aware of its impact". They also say that the threat of additional fees is causing a growing concern among our neighbours and partners to the south. Given that we are about to begin lengthy negotiations on enhanced trade between Canada and the United States, there is a definite danger that the restriction on marine transportation could be misinterpreted. The St. Lawrence Seaway system is jointly