

Canada Shipping Act

Could the Hon. Member comment on how we might best address the concerns that he, his colleague the Hon. Member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia), the Hon. Member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan (Mr. Angus) and others have expressed? Should we deal with it in the standing committee, or is the legislative committee itself perhaps a forum that would be adequate?

Mr. Penner: I want to accept the words of the Parliamentary Secretary that the Minister and the Government are fully cognizant of all of the environmental issues related to oil tanker shipping through the Northwest Passage and that they are as sensitive as it is possible to be to the Inuit people who call that home. They have unsettled claims and legitimate concerns about their traditional way of life. Increased shipping could disrupt that traditional way of life and even result over time in the extinction of a very proud, noble and able people who inhabit an inhospitable environment and therefore have earned the admiration of people around the world for what they do. I want to believe all of that on behalf of the Government. I will be looking for evidence that it is real.

As to which committee, the standing committee or the legislative committee, carries out the work of the House of Commons after this reading of the Bill does not matter to me. It is important that members who sit on the committee are prepared to listen to the Inuit leaders of Canada.

I would think, Mr. Speaker, that the Parliamentary Secretary may want to consider having members of the legislative committee visit certain selected Inuit communities to see firsthand why these concerns are so valid, that it is not mere rhetoric on the part of Inuit leaders. They are not simply trying to attract attention to themselves or cause difficulty. Their concerns are legitimate. This would allow members of the committee to empathize with the Inuit people about these concerns. My suggestion is first to listen to the leaders and, second, Committee members perhaps should go to some communities.

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Hon. Member on time frame. In looking at this Bill, all Members of the House will agree that it is a plan within Transport Canada for marine routing as well as regulatory plans directly related north of 60 and also south of 60. There are some good things involved in it, such as safety measures and so on.

The Hon. Member touched on the Beaufort panel recommendations on the completion of scientific evaluation which are to provide two Class 10 icebreaking tankers and so on. Concerning the time frame, the Hon. Member touched on some interesting matters that for decades have been going on between the Government of Canada, the Inuit and other native people north of 60 concerning claims. A great deal of scientific effort has gone into the Beaufort panel and into looking at Polar Bear Pass, Lancaster Sound etc.

What kind of time frame does the Hon. Member think is reasonable to complete the claims? What about the aboriginal people north of 60? As I said to the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) he soundly planted the flag of

Canada upon their backs in terms of sovereignty. What time frame would it take realistically to complete the comprehensive claim process? We have to involve the native people and northern Governments in setting aside those zones of incredible ecological sensitivity, such as Lancaster Sound and other areas. We just do not have an industrial marine routing plan here where various ice densities are considered. We have to deal with the proximity to Cameron Island and to the various Beaufort fields. We have to deal with the best routing systems either to the Pacific Rim, to Europe or to other areas of the world. How long would it take to implement those things? We have a great body of scientific information. Would it not be more proper for this House to complete the comprehensive claims and to put in place a protection system for those ecological zones north of 60 so we can advise not only northerners but Canadians generally that this kind of a routing system is soundly based?

Many Members of this House tend to forget that the area north of 60 is one of the globe's greatest and most profound deserts. It has very small oases of biological activity and if you do not protect those now in the early considerations of various routes, we may well lose a great global resource through disasters that could beset us.

I know my question is complex, but in terms of the cart, we have the cart here now but it seems to be well in front of some very important moral, legal and ecological considerations that have to be put in place. I am interested in the Hon. Member's well researched views on what kind of a time frame this House should be considering to implement those other phases before this actually becomes a reality?

Mr. Penner: Mr. Speaker, I think one of the regrettable aspects of Bill C-75 is that in dealing in some very necessary ways with navigational concerns with the southern and the northern waters, they are taken together in the same Bill and dealt with in precisely the same way. I think the Hon. Member probably would agree with me that the northern waters ought to be taken out of Bill C-75. This Bill should not apply to northern waters. We should be awaiting settlement of claims. Settlement of claims is long over due. I think there has been an unconscionable delay in settling those claims. However, the Minister is to announce at the end of November a new claims policy, and I hope that claims policy will remove certain existing impediments that delayed the settlement of claims. Those impediments are well known to Members who served on the Standing Committee and who know about Arctic problems. They must be taken out, and then we could move very swiftly to the settlement of those claims. Certainly that would involve extensive mechanisms or arrangements for consultations on the environment.

● (1430)

I conclude my answer by reminding Hon. Members that the Macdonald Royal Commission indicated that the movement toward a settlement of comprehensive claims should be accelerated. Unfortunately, that commission put another obstacle in the way and said that political aspects should be