

*Canada Shipping Act*

—I know it is unnecessary to recite recent statistics to prove that utilization by both grain and iron ore was in free fall last year. The tonnage is down on the St. Lawrence Seaway culminating a downward trend that began in 1979.

Clearly positive action is required if that trend is to be reversed before permanent damage is done in this context. The imposition of any additional cost at this time is extremely negative.

Clause 4 requires a great deal of revision before it is ready to be passed into legislation. In view of the fact that it would be totally inappropriate to impose any fees for coast guard services under conditions forecast for this year and next, this time should be used to draft soundly conceived legislation. In the meantime Clause 4 should be removed from Bill C-75. I urge you to take that action before serious damage is done.

Yours sincerely,  
The Chairman.

That is a letter written to the Prime Minister nine days ago urging him to remove Clause 4 from Bill C-75.

Notwithstanding the fact that that letter was written, notwithstanding the fact that the Premier of Quebec as recently as last week received a commitment from the Prime Minister to have another look at Clause 4, here we are today with what I call a festering sore that has been grafted onto what is otherwise a decent Bill still in place, namely, Clause 4. That is not too serious just yet.

A moment ago I said it is inconceivable to me that the Government would claim it could make a free trade deal with the Government of the United States, a comprehensive deal, if it cannot even do its part in jointly managing the St. Lawrence Seaway system which, after all, is co-owned and co-managed by both Canada and the United States. In Canada the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority looks after our part of managing the St. Lawrence Seaway, and in the United States the Great Lakes Commission looks after their end of the deal.

The Great Lakes Commission, our co-partners in managing the Seaway has also written the Prime Minister of Canada. May I, with your permission, Mr. Speaker, read their letter?

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:—

Not as familiar as the previous fellow, no "Dear Brian".

—the Great Lakes Commission is deeply concerned about proposed Bill C-75 which would authorize the imposition of cost recovery for Canadian coast guard services.

The Commission respects Canada's need to raise additional revenues. It also accepts Canada's choice of user fees as one vehicle to accomplish that end. However, the Commission, as the only co-ordinating and advocacy agency established by the States and approved by Congress to provide a collective voice for the eight Great Lake states on water resource and related issues, would be remiss if it did not express opposition to the current language of Bill C-75.

The Commission has monitored the progress of C-75 in Parliament, has participated in regional discussions about potential impacts of the Coast Guard cost recovery provision, Clause 4.

● (1220)

There is that dastardly Clause 4 again. The British Columbia Council of Forest Industries, the farmers in Prince Edward Island, the fishermen in Newfoundland, Atlantic Canada and along the coast of British Columbia, those fellows in the corporate boardrooms of the shipping companies and the American Great Lakes Commission all identify this unsightly

wart of Clause 4 on what is otherwise an almost pristine piece of decent legislation.

The Commission emphasizes four provisions that it believes to be necessary before this legislation can proceed. Federal user fees should be uniform in application from seaport to seaport, from coastal range to coastal range. There must be clear determination of the purpose for which fees are to be collected and the activities to which they are to be applied in advance of passing the legislation. Any fee system as it may affect the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence system should be co-ordinated with U.S. cost recovery programs and should give due consideration to total elimination of existing St. Lawrence Seaway system tolls. In other words, they want to go the other way and make the system more competitive. Finally, they recommend that any user-fee proposal should involve thorough public consultation with all user groups.

They go on to note that they have been in touch with Canada's Ambassador, Mr. Gotlieb, and appreciate his presence at the Commission's semi-annual meeting in Washington. They quote the Ambassador as having told them: "There is no doubt that your interest as a vitally affected party will not be ignored in the development of any user-fee program."

I want to tell the Great Lakes Commission that they are in good company. They are in the same company as the Premier and the Minister of Transportation for Quebec, the fishermen of Atlantic Canada, Canada's shipping industry and hundreds of witnesses who have made submissions before the legislative committee. The Great Lakes Commission, the American authority, has been treated even-handedly and fairly, and no better or worse than Canadians. They too have been ignored. Their advice has been sloughed off and we are debating this measure which should have been flung over the wharf, as my friends at home would say.

We have a letter from our Ambassador, who speaks on behalf of Canada, to the Southwest Senate Coalition. These Senators who represent the states along the Great Lakes are also concerned about Clause 4. In a lengthy letter, which I will not read in its entirety, the Ambassador assured them that their concerns will be looked at and we will try to work in conjunction with them. That has not happened.

Who did the Government disappoint down south, after saying it would work with them in jointly managing the Seaway? They are, to name a few, Alan J. Dixon, a U.S. Senator. John Glenn, a former astronaut, who is now a U.S. Senator, and the others; Carl Levin, Rudy Boschwitz, Don Quayle, William Proxmire, David Durenberger, Richard Lugar, Donald Riegle Jr., Bob Kasten, Jr., Howard Metzenbaum and Paul Simon, all of whom are U.S. Senators. All of them have written to the Prime Minister of Canada and have been in contact with our Ambassador, expressing their concern that Canada would proceed with one user-fee recovery system on the Seaway while the Americans are going in the other direction.