

the Canadian Government has never had an industrial transport strategy on the use of those resources.

● (1730)

Mr. Speaker, we Members of the New Democratic Party are fully aware of the fact that the City of Montreal is an international centre, a world centre of transport and communications. Because of its location on the North American continent, Montreal is the place where head offices of transport companies such as Air Canada, Canadian National Railways and Canadian Pacific are found. It is also the site of Canada's largest harbour because, traditionally, it has been the Canadian maritime trade gateway, besides being the turntable of our railways. Its airports—Mirabel and Dorval—make it a world communications centre as evidenced by the fact that several major communications companies like Bell Canada and Tele-globe Canada are located in Montreal, as is the International Air Transport Association.

So we have to wonder whether the Government is prepared to promote the development of Montreal through a municipal, regional, provincial and national strategy which would indeed make the city a world transportation and communications centre.

I would suggest that it is the kind of strategy we must implement, but what do we see? We see, for instance, that although the new Port of Montreal is autonomous in relation to the Canada Ports Corporation, it still depends entirely on the federal Government. There is no input on the executive board from the Province of Quebec, no real input from the people and municipalities that depend on the port, no concept of a strategy for using the resources, including buildings and other facilities, of the Port of Montreal for the industrial and strategic development of the City of Montreal and the general area.

Mr. Speaker, the same could be said as far as the province of Quebec is concerned. It is interesting to note that the PQ Government in Quebec has had very little to say about the fact that during the eight years the PQ has been in power, two of the major ports in the province of Quebec have remained under control of the federal Government, and also that nothing has been done by the PQ Government to provide for a partnership system, under which both Governments, the Quebec provincial Government and the Canadian Government, would share responsibility for these important resources in the St. Lawrence River.

Mr. Speaker, instead of seeing the St. Lawrence as a major national resource, this Government has decided to levy charges on navigation and shipping in the St. Lawrence River which may become very high and very costly. There is a serious risk that this may further reduce shipping, which is so important for the province of Quebec and Eastern Canada in general.

Mr. Speaker, because of the physical geography of our country, the cost of maintaining the Coast Guard in Eastern

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Canada is higher than it is in Western Canada, or rather, British Columbia. If we levy charges to cover the cost of maintaining the Coast Guard in Eastern Canada, for instance, this may well create even greater disadvantages than the problems we already have now and which we are experiencing, for instance, with the Seaway.

I think the Minister should explain how we can expect shipping to develop on the St. Lawrence Seaway if we increase the charges for the Seaway by 25 to 30 per cent and introduce a full cost-recovery system which is apparently being proposed by the Government in Clause 4 of this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, I think we have an abundance of examples to show it does not make sense to recover the total cost from users of our transportation facilities. Furthermore, we must consider the history of this country, and the fact that the location of our cities and towns, our regions and industries, has often been an accident of history. It is a fact of life and we cannot get around it. For instance, are we going to say that in future, we can no longer provide ferry services for the residents of Prince Edward Island because costs have become too high and the Government wants to recover the full cost? I do not think the last passenger to use the lighthouse and ferry services between Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick should be forced to pay the entire cost of navigational aids, and so forth.

Is that the Government's position? Well, they will say: Maybe not, because we do have a constitutional obligation. In any case, the same problems exist in the rest of Canada, and especially in the province of Quebec and perhaps also in Ontario.

My colleague from Northern Ontario pointed out that if navigation charges were levied on small pleasure boats in the northern canal near Lake Superior, these boats would be doomed to extinction because nobody would be able to pay the requisite fee. If we apply the same principle to the Rideau Canal, the result could well be the same. We might see a time when this canal, which is very important in recreational terms, would be hardly used because of the charges levied by the Government, thanks to the principles of Mr. Stevens and the Minister of Transport, of Economics, who want all costs to be borne by users.

[English]

This principle which is to put forward full cost recovery ignores a great deal of history. It ignores that initially in the development of our country the St. Lawrence was the only highway we had. Settlements along the St. Lawrence in Quebec, dating back to 1642 or thereabouts, were located there because the only way one could get around was by boat, coasting from one location to another. I do not think that in 1640 people anticipated the current Minister of Transport (Mr. Mazankowski) would be coming along with Clause 4 of Bill C-75 requiring that the full cost of those navigational aids of ice-breaker services and that kind of thing should be imposed—