

Transportation of Dangerous Goods

from one mode of transport to another, across provincial boundaries, and on board ships or planes destined for overseas, the new legislation will reduce the number of shipping documents required to the minimum. Similarly, marking and labelling of packages and containers will be simplified, as will packaging requirements themselves, so that goods will not have to be unpacked and repacked or unlabelled and relabelled every time they are transferred from one place to another or from one means of transport to another.

In sum, the bill contains provisions which will enable safety standards, procedures and marks to be applied uniformly to all classes of dangerous goods, regardless of the mode or modes of transport by which they may be travelling. It takes into account the duties and responsibilities of all of those involved in the preparation, handling and transportation of such products, and imposes on them whatever liabilities are appropriate to their role in the transportation process. Indeed, for the first time, it will make those who buy and sell dangerous goods as responsible as the carriers traditionally have been for the safe transport of those products.

Conformity with the regulations and standards which will follow from the passage of this legislation will be enforced by specially trained inspectors, some employed directly by Transport Canada and some by other government departments at the federal, provincial and municipal levels. These inspectors will have fairly extensive powers of inspection and detention of potentially hazardous goods or packages and will be able to impose fines in certain circumstances. They will also be in a position to take all possible measures to contain the effects of accidents or incidents involving dangerous goods in transport.

● (1550)

The bill thus represents one of three prongs of a comprehensive safety program for the transportation of dangerous goods, the first being a legislative instrument designed to deal with the serious consequences of transporting dangerous goods in an unsafe manner. The second prong of the safety program will be the development of multi-modal regulations under the authority of the bill to ensure that dangerous goods are properly identified as being dangerous and that they enter, pass through, and leave the transportation system in a safe and economic way. The third prong will be the development of an emergency response program in co-operation with other federal agencies and with the provinces.

It goes without saying that legislation cannot prevent accidents. But it can reduce them by deterring people from taking unnecessary risks, and it can mitigate ensuing damages by enabling emergency response personnel to react in the most appropriate manner when such accidents occur.

I referred earlier, Mr. Speaker, to a common desire for regulation in this area. That this desire is shared by the Government of Canada with the governments of the provinces and the industries involved has been demonstrated over the past four or five years by an unprecedented degree of consultation and co-operation between all three in attempting to formulate mutually acceptable legislation and regulations. That it is

[Mr. Cullen.]

shared with the United States and other major trading partners has been demonstrated by the concentrated and fruitful discussions that have taken place within the framework of specialized agencies of the United Nations, such as the International Maritime Consultative Organization, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the Economic and Social Council, the Economic Commission for Europe, and between specialists in Transport Canada and the United States department of transport.

Now a third party may be said to have intervened: the general public. As a result of the publicity given to the increasing number of transportation accidents and incidents involving dangerous goods, there is a growing public awareness of the dangers to human life and to the environment presented by new and ever more powerful and potentially destructive chemicals travelling across the country. This awareness is giving rise to frequent questions directed to Transport Canada to find out how the transportation of such goods is regulated in this country.

I hope that I have persuaded hon. members of the vital need for uniform legislation governing the transportation of dangerous goods in Canada, both from the point of view of safety and with respect to the maintenance of good and prosperous trade relations with other countries. The Government of Canada has played a very active part in inter-provincial and international attempts to establish uniform safety standards, and it is in our best interest to proceed with the enabling legislation contained in Bill C-17.

Mr. Don Mazankowski (Vegreville): Mr. Speaker, at the outset may I say that our party supports the principle and therefore the major objective of this piece of legislation. I believe it is fair to say as well that we acknowledge the need for such a piece of legislation, given the fact that there has been an increasing number of fatal and near fatal incidents involving dangerous goods, which unquestionably highlights the need for a co-ordinated law which is put before us in the form of this bill now, and to ensure that the public interest will be assured and that the movement of dangerous goods will not harm the Canadian public.

I would like to say also that we on this side of the House are disturbed and disappointed by the piecemeal approach of the government relative to transportation since the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) has taken over the helm. We believe that we should have before us the comprehensive new policy thrust which had been introduced in the form of Bill C-33 back in 1976. A similar bill was reintroduced in the form of Bill C-20. We have had a series of white papers and policy statements advanced by the Minister of Transport as a result of the government's new policy thrust, but none of those documents has ever been referred to a committee for consideration. Perhaps they were discussed only at a committee meeting or two.

I want to say to you, sir, that the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications is probably one of the most underutilized and underemployed committees of the House, in spite of the fact that transportation is key to the attainment of