

Safe Containers Act

Until this bill is passed, we do not have a vehicle to ratify that international convention. The bill will facilitate the transport of Canadian containerized cargo through application in Canada of internationally accepted standards of container safety. Passage of the bill will be received positively by the industry that will be directly affected by the provisions of the convention. I would urge all members of the House to support the bill.

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, one area that has concerned me for some time is relatively new in terms of hazardous cargo. Of late we have been seeing more and more in the press and in other places about the problems which are now confronting many municipalities regarding liquid industrial waste, the mixing of liquid industrial waste, and its transportation. I have noted with some alarm that the containers presently used both for storage and transportation really were not designed for many of the liquids that are mixed together and therefore become something other than what they were in the first place.

I should like to suggest that in the processes we set up for inspection we pay particular attention to that area, both in terms of storage and transportation. I am sure we have all read of the recent Love Canal incident in Buffalo, New York, where a lack of knowledge and a consequent lack of concern resulted in the dumping of hazardous materials which turned out to be injurious to health. I would not want us to use the practice that is presently carried out of simple tanker carriers for transporting liquid industrial waste which heretofore were used for any other number of less noxious, less hazardous substances.

When the minister and the ministry undertake a review and establish the standards of the convention, they must pay particular attention to that extremely difficult, somewhat new and very hazardous area. They must ensure that we do not have the kinds of things happening in this country which have been happening for the last number of years, where carriers simply have allowed, either inadvertently or sometimes, I suspect, on purpose, the leakage of waste to become a hazard all over the countryside.

Perhaps a nod from the minister would either verify or deny my understanding that this legislation is not retroactive and therefore not applicable to existing carriers. Is it or is it not retroactive?

● (1430)

Mr. Bockstael: It is not retroactive.

Mr. Deans: It is not retroactive; that is what I thought. Therefore, I would like to suggest that, because this is an extremely difficult area and will be more and more the subject of debate both here and in other houses across the country, we take a serious look at the methods used for transporting liquid industrial wastes at this time. We should attempt to find a way

to bring into conformity with this legislation, which is intended to protect the public, guarantees that these carriers of liquid industrial wastes are appropriately inspected, and make sure that the vehicles used are up to the standards of the convention over a period of time. As a result, we will not have people who are presently in the business circumventing the protection we hope to provide by using vehicles and tankers that were manufactured prior to the implementation of this act, thereby continuing a practice that has been extremely hazardous in a number of areas across the country.

As we review how this legislation will be applied, we should look carefully at the methods of storing these selfsame wastes. For most of us there is a degree of apprehension and anxiety that develops when we are not fully aware of what happens when certain industrial wastes, now being developed on a day by day basis for industrial purposes, react on being subsequently mixed within holding tanks; because what can emerge can be an entirely different substance with a considerably greater impact.

I would, therefore, say to the minister that with the passage of this bill we are taking some steps forward. There is yet a vast area of concern that has not been dealt with in this bill, and that ought to be addressed by the House of Commons in the very near future.

Mr. Dan McKenzie (Winnipeg-Assiniboine): Mr. Speaker, I wish to speak very briefly on this bill. We had an interesting discussion in the committee earlier this week on Bill C-21, at which time I raised the issue of the transportation of chemicals on passenger aircraft. The parliamentary secretary and his officials informed members of the committee that cabin crews have access to cargoes so that if they detect fumes or smoke coming from the cargo they can check it. However, we were not given a satisfactory explanation of how the crew can gain access to cargo holds, and the officials undertook to obtain more information.

Would the minister also have his officials determine how Air Canada, CP Air or any other airline in Canada can determine what chemicals are actually in containers? There have been situations in the United States and Canada where shippers have put wrong labels on containers, for whatever reason—perhaps to speed up the shipment or get a shipment on a passenger jet instead of a cargo aircraft. Certain chemicals can be shipped by cargo planes only, while other less dangerous substances can be shipped on passenger jets. How do these people determine what actually is in these containers? Do they open a certain number of them to see that the content is that which in fact is on the label, or do they go strictly by what it says on the label?

I ask this because a number of years ago there was a fatal crash of a Pan American World Airways cargo jet at Boston. The aircraft was carrying half a dozen different chemicals, some of which leaked into the sawdust in the box which caught