

Maritime Code

● (2020)

There is a situation that has developed in British Columbia in which we do not trust the government in Ottawa any longer in its desire to rule by regulation. There are too many examples on the record of rule by regulation favouring some and not being applied uniformly across the land to all the interests competing in the same arena.

West coast interests have been on the record with the two ministers since 1973 in this regard and, as I said, not one of those interests has been invited to appear before the Committee on Transport and Communications during its deliberations and study of this bill. The minister has gone to a great deal of trouble to circulate a whole series of telegrams and letters he has received from various interested groups in Canada who are in favour of the passage of Bill C-61. It is very interesting to note that of all these letters and telegrams that have been circulated, fundamentally from the unions and the guilds in the Great Lakes region, none that I can see comes from anyone outside that group of unions and corporations in the Great Lakes region. This is the region that supports Bill C-61 as it is presently written.

I notice also, and I guess this adds to the feeling of distrust we have out west, that none of the other submissions have been circulated by the minister to give a fair view of our concern in British Columbia. This is the group of organizations and associations which co-ordinate the interests of the people and employees in British Columbia. They are concerned about the spin-off and detrimental effect to our markets and to the rising costs that we are facing in transport of goods to market, and in the transport costs of the goods we receive from the Atlantic provinces.

I might say that the B.C. Council of Forest Industries put in a specific request to meet with the committee. The committee was out in Vancouver studying the port of Vancouver. It sat three days there and visited the port and the airport at Seattle, yet at no time did the B.C. Forest Council receive an invitation to appear before the committee. Why is that when it has had briefs prepared and its concerns have been expressed most clearly in telegrams and letters? That council has not been given the chance to put its positions specifically on the record. I hope I am able, in the time allotted to me tonight, to do just that for that council.

That council was also advised by the hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Anderson) in this regard, and I will read his letter into the record. This is a letter sent by the hon. member for Comox-Alberni on House of Commons letterhead to the Council of Forest Industries, British Columbia, under date of May 27, addressed to Mr. Lanskill:

As you may have heard it is the government's intent to recess on June 30 and for this reason it will be impossible to give third reading to Bill C-61 prior to this date.

It is still unclear as to whether a new session will be initiated upon members' return to parliament in September or October and therefore Bill C-61 may or may not be carried forth into the fall and winter session. For this reason the informal committee of which I was appointed co-chairman to study regulations dealing with Bill C-61 will not meet certainly before the end of June and possibly if the bill is not carried forth, ever.

[Mr. Huntington.]

Representations have been made to the minister by British Columbia Liberal caucus members and you can rest assured your interests will be considered in any new proposed legislation.

Just what is going on, Mr. Speaker? This is a letter to a very responsible organization which is overseeing an industry that provides 65 per cent of the income of British Columbia, and it received a letter such as this from a member who purports to be the co-chairman of the committee. He said the bill would not be brought forth in the fall. Then what are we doing here today? The government has brought the bill forth but did not even place it on the list of legislation to be discussed by parliament prior to the summer recess. This is another reason why there is a feeling of mistrust in the west concerning the attempts and the desires of the minister and his staff to cover key points concerning British Columbia and other maritime provinces by regulation.

If the government is really sincere it would be very easy for it to put these points of concern into the statute and not into regulation. The whole thing causing concern is the attitude on the part of the government. The feeling of mistrust is there, and if I were on the government benches I would be extremely concerned about that mistrust of the department and of Ottawa in general.

Added to this attitude, we have a member of the Department of Transport commenting in a newspaper column. He was being interviewed concerning the technical details of the cruising industry in British Columbia. It is reported in the newspaper that:

When representations were made to one Ottawa transport official, he replied: "Why don't they pick up their passengers at Seattle?"

The passenger cruising industry out in the port of Vancouver carries on between the months of May and September. Since I was born that very beautiful cruise along the coast of British Columbia up to Alaska has been run by Canadian ships; the CNR ran a vessel and the CPR ran a vessel, and for years that was one of the great experiences, travelling up the coast and back between May and September.

Our tastes have changed. That whole industry now depends on cruise ships that can carry 350 to 400 people during the short season from May to September. We were never able to cut the mustard with Canadian bottoms because of the short season, but now all of a sudden we want to destroy the industry that has a spin-off effect in these short months within the port of Vancouver, and the spin-off effect amounts to \$29 million for virtualising these ships, and the expenditures of passengers and the clientele of these ships. Yet we are here fooling around with this kind of input in my city.

I have been asked if there is any concern for this industry in my province, particularly in view of this type of interference and dogmatic attitude whereby this \$29 million seasonal industry should be sloughed off to the city of Seattle. How are we going to keep our pay rolls going in order that our economy can help pay off the debts we have incurred in the past three years in the province of British Columbia unless we do something constructive?

There is a complete lack of trust and faith in the west regarding rule by regulation. There were two gentlemen, one from the CTC and one from MOT, out meeting with various interest groups in British Columbia recently, and I