

Canada Shipping Act

harvest, he found that he had produced more grain, at lower cost, than had ever been the case before on that farm.

One wet afternoon, he was taking stock of the rest of the farm. He noted that only 11 of the plum trees in the orchard had borne fruit. One did not have any fruit. He immediately utilized his extensive knowledge from the school of economics and ripped out that one plum tree. Thereafter, he had no more plums because he had pulled out the male tree.

I think the planners in the Department of Transport and some of the policy makers in the previous Liberal Government and this Government are doing the same thing by looking at the bottom line and trying to instigate a user-pay philosophy. They are missing the whole point of why we have a transportation system. That is why we are attempting to have recourse to Parliament where the whole intention and feelings of the people of Canada can be heard, so that 20 parliamentarians can intervene if the rates at Churchill or the rates through the Seaway—which is also a very real possibility—become too high for people to use these waterways. We have a lot of wheat and iron ore going through the Seaway. That traffic has been tapering off because of economic conditions and demands. Now is not the time to impose another 50 cents per tonne in charges against those commodities shipped through the Seaway. Now is the time to realize that transportation is a necessary function for all Canadians, and that is why we think we should receive support for these motions before us.

[Translation]

Mr. Fernand Robichaud (Westmorland—Kent): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-75 this afternoon. I am somewhat familiar with this measure because I sat on the legislative committee to which it was referred. As a Member of the committee I was privileged to listen to a number of very interesting briefs presented by groups of people who are going to be affected by this Bill. In a nutshell, Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no doubt that some of the proposed changes are long overdue, and time has come for Canada to overhaul the Canada Shipping Act which ensures navigation safety, safeguards human lives offshore, and protects marine wildlife in Canadian waters and fishing zones.

A number of these changes are urgently needed, such as allowing Canada to deal more readily with cases of marine pollution, to improve shipping safety and to adopt a number of important international maritime conventions. I can agree with this part of the Bill, Mr. Speaker, but I cannot agree with Clause 4, which is aimed at giving the Government, and more specifically the Minister, the authority to impose charges for a number of services. I certainly do not agree with letting the Minister impose charges on navigation aids, sounding, dredging, vessel traffic services, ice breaking services and marine aid.

As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity to listen to several submissions, and the Parliamentary Secretary was saying earlier that most of these submissions agreed with the principle of service charges, of user fees. Now I would like to

ask the Parliamentary Secretary to name a single intervenor who agreed with the way the Government intends to impose these charges. I do not think there was a single group, Mr. Speaker, that agreed with the procedure. There were a number of comments regarding the other clauses, and it seems there had even been some consultations with these groups, but none of the groups had been consulted about the changes being proposed in Clause 4, and that is where the groups objected to giving the Minister authority to impose user fees. Mr. Speaker, after listening to all these submissions, some Hon. Members, if we are to believe the articles we saw in the press, agreed and felt that Clause 4 should not be implemented as proposed, and with your permission, I will read a short article:

● (1740)

[English]

“Service charge plan likely to be dropped.”

[Translation]

This was from Halifax.

[English]

“The federal Government probably will change its mind and not start charging people for Coast Guard services such as ice breaking, tows, rescues and dredging”, Mike Forrestall, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, said yesterday. The cost recovery plan has evoked steady criticism.”

[Translation]

Today, Mr. Speaker, I see the Parliamentary Secretary has changed his mind, since he now supports Clause 4. I realized recently that Government Members could change their minds without being too worried about the consequences, and this clause proves it.

Mr. Speaker, we are talking about Clause 4 and service charges. Neither the Minister nor anyone on the Government side has been able to tell us how much these charges would be and how they would be implemented. The groups appearing before the Committee asked us: How are you going to collect this money and how much will the charges be?

Some representatives, some of the people who made submissions told us that the marine shipping industry was very competitive. They were talking about cents, not dollars per ton, which could make all the difference in whether or not you obtained a shipping contract. The competition is so fierce they were talking about cents per ton.

Mr. Speaker, with your permission, I would like to present some of the arguments we heard from these groups. These are in fact the reasons why I support the amendments proposed by my colleague from Thunder Bay—Atikokan (Mr. Angus). If these changes were adopted, we would at least be informed of any change in the regulations. We would also have the assurance that Clause 4 would not become effective until January 1988. Even though the Minister has said he will not put it into effect before January 1988, it would be a good thing to have the Bill say so.