

TRANSPORTATION OF DANGEROUS GOODS ACT**MEASURE TO PROMOTE SAFETY AND TO PROTECT ENVIRONMENT**

Hon. Bud Cullen (for the Minister of Transport) moved that Bill C-17, to promote public safety and the protection of the environment in the transportation of dangerous goods, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications.

He said: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleague, the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang), I should say that he is in Newfoundland, a very important part of this country, as I am sure my hon. colleagues opposite would concede, signing agreements which I think will be for the benefit of that province.

Canada's growing trade relations with other countries on other continents, combined with rapid technological change in the transportation industry and the increasing use of dangerous substances in common manufacturing processes, have generated an urgent need to regulate the transportation of dangerous goods.

The wide variety of legislative instruments which are currently being used to regulate the transportation of dangerous goods has been proclaimed by various levels of government at various times and in connection with individual modes of transport or specific goods. Obviously it cannot be claimed that, even taken as a whole, they will provide a satisfactory method of ensuring that these goods will enter, pass through, and leave the transportation system safely or economically. On the contrary, manufacturers, shippers and carriers of dangerous goods are at present faced with a confusing maze of regulations, depending on the means of transport being used and the places to or from which goods are being carried. Canada is not alone in having to face the need to resolve this problem, but we can take some pride in saying that with the valuable support of the provinces and of the industries concerned we are among the world leaders in formulating multimodal legislation in this area.

Bill C-17, to promote public safety and the protection of the environment in the transportation of dangerous goods, will impose fairly severe penalties on those involved in the transportation of dangerous goods who seek to avoid their responsibilities. That in this country such persons are remarkably few in number is strikingly demonstrated by the absence of serious accidents involving the transportation of dangerous goods in Canada. It is no longer possible, however, to rely solely on domestic standards to maintain this safety record. In any event, there is one area of activity where no uniform safety requirements are in force in this country, namely, highway transport.

Dealing with the international aspects first, it is obvious that, just as standards for container safety cannot be left to individual nations to determine, standards governing the packaging, marking and methods of handling dangerous goods must be international in nature.

Transportation of Dangerous Goods

Since 1957 a committee of experts on the transport of dangerous goods has been reporting to the economic and social council of the United Nations and making recommendations dealing with the matters to which I have just referred. Canada has been an active member on that committee, and there is now a substantial area of international agreement on the standards to be applied, sufficient to warrant major legislation by the Government of Canada. Such legislation would establish norms and provide for detailed regulations setting out the duties and responsibilities of all those involved, from the moment when goods are prepared for shipment until they arrive at their final destination.

As I have said, highway transport raises special problems within Canada as well as between Canada and the United States. The problems which arise within Canada result from the fact that for the most part highway traffic and highway safety legislation is within provincial jurisdiction, as are incidental laws relating to such matters as labour safety, environmental protection, and emergency response planning. As a result, different standards may be required by each province. This problem is compounded by the fact that the United States has its own standards, which may be partly acceptable or totally acceptable in some provinces but not in others, and may or may not conflict with Canadian federal laws and regulations.

There has been a great deal of co-operation between our two countries, chiefly by means of reciprocal agreements to accept the standards of the other country for packaging and labelling. There are, however, some areas where less easily soluble problems have begun to arise, for example, the Canadian and Quebec requirements that all shipping documents and package markings be in French and English—a characteristic which does not commend itself to the United States—and the Canadian desire to adopt World Health Organization toxicity standards, which would lead to more substances being regulated in Canada than in the United States.

Uniform legislation within Canada would obviously facilitate the negotiation of mutually acceptable arrangements with the United States in these and other areas. To the extent that Canada as a country can implement United Nations standards, the need for uniform rules for all modes of transport for industries involved in the manufacturing and shipping of dangerous goods can also be met.

This is an ideal shared by industry and government alike, and is demonstrated by the clearly expressed desire of all concerned for consistent and comprehensive regulation in this field, a desire which contrasts markedly with the current trend to criticize government intervention in the private sector.

At first glance, some affected parties might have reacted adversely to the idea that their paper work apparently was going to be increased and their overhead costs escalated by the introduction of yet another piece of transport legislation. In fact, they have for the most part realized that the effect of the proposed transportation of dangerous goods act and regulations will be the very opposite. Where now three or more documents may be required if goods are being transferred