

Government Orders

There are now more food banks in the country than there are McDonald's restaurants. Child poverty is a shameful, widespread reality in every part of the country. Yet, the government cannot understand why people are hungry and are being left off that boat in the Montreal harbour. The fact is that that boat in the Montreal harbour is our boat. It is our port. It is our government. It is our country, whether the members opposite want to listen or not.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Order! I would ask the hon. member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre for his co-operation so that we can get back to the matter under consideration.

[*English*]

Mr. Laporte: Mr. Speaker, I will conclude by saying that Liberals and Conservatives, when in power, have forgotten about the price we pay in this country for many of the items that their friends seem to enjoy. It is Canadians who pay for this. It is time to take the boat back and it is time to take our country back.

With that in mind, the New Democrats will examine this bill in committee to see whether or not it enhances accountability and whether or not it can be improved to make the operations of these two ports more transparent, while keeping in mind the needs of any competitive corporation. Bill C-82 is not the beginning of open, democratic society, but there are issues which it raises which must be raised and must be pursued. We welcome the opportunity to deal with those issues and we look forward to sending this bill to committee.

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, I will try to apply the test of relevance, but I must say that, having just heard the protestations of my hon. colleague from the New Democratic Party while he was throwing all politicians into the same bad hamper *vis-à-vis* the public trust, I have to say that a lot of us were shaking our heads on the weekend when we read about an NDP member who is using his immunity as a member of Parliament to avoid paying leadership debts. Frankly, for a party which prides itself in being so open with the public trust, I have to shake my head and ask myself why it is proceeding in that fashion. That does not meet the test of relevance, but I thought it bore speaking about

because, frankly, I did agree with some of the points that were made by my hon. colleague in the NDP.

In examining the issue of Bill C-82, one can look at it in its narrow form.

[*Translation*]

As a microcosm, we can say that we should have made some changes ages ago precisely to up-date the system now in place, particularly in the St. Lawrence river and the St. Lawrence Seaway. But at the same time, it gives the government the opportunity to review the policies on all the ports, including the Port of Hamilton.

[*English*]

I could not see Bill C-82 pass second reading without asking the government, in its wisdom, in looking at the very specific amendments dealing with the issues of fees and the composition of the ports of Montreal and Quebec, why it was not taking the wider vision of restructuring and revamping the system of regulation over all our federal harbours. If you look at the fiasco of the Hamilton Harbour over the last couple of months, it is clear that the current system is wanting.

• (1800)

The Minister of Transport is no doubt aware, in a non-partisan way, because I know how non-partisan he wants to be on this issue, of the fact that several weeks ago the city of Hamilton passed a unanimous resolution, supported by so-called members of the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party, the NDP, and, I suspect, some other political affiliations. That particular resolution which followed a resolution, which was sent to the Hon. Minister of Transport as of March 20 of this year, from the city of Hamilton went directly to the Prime Minister's office. It called upon the Prime Minister to hold a full public inquiry, among other things, into the issue of the Lush affair. That letter went out to the Hon. Prime Minister of Canada in early October and for the record—

An hon. member: That is not related to the bill.

Ms. Copps: It relates to the bill because the bill deals with the provision of a port warden for the Harbour of Quebec and an act to amend and consolidate the acts arising out of the office of port warden for the Harbour of Montreal. I am suggesting that instead of coming in with the small step to clean up a particular situation in Montreal and Quebec, what the government should do is