

Canada Shipping Act

the commercial advantages ought to pay a user fee for that service.

All the arguments that have been presented today by the Opposition when speaking of commercial-type services does not make sense. I will certainly vote against the proposed amendment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to take part in the debate on the motion presented by the Hon. Member to amend Clause 4 of Bill C-75, an Act to amend the Canada Shipping Act and to amend the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act, the Maritime Code Act and the Oil and Gas Production and Conservation Act in consequence thereof.

Naturally, Mr. Speaker, the people in Ottawa—Vanier might wonder what argument their Member of Parliament can make about this Bill and why he is interested in this matter.

[*English*]

Mr. Angus: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On a point of order the Hon. Member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan (Mr. Angus).

Mr. Angus: Just on a point of order, I wonder if the Hon. Member would give permission for my colleague to speak. He has another function he must attend.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Hon. Member for Gander—Twillingate (Mr. Baker) on the same point of order.

Mr. Baker: A Liberal spoke and then a Conservative spoke and I thought it would have gone back to the NDP.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Hon. Member for Gander—Twillingate is correct. It was my mistake. I should have recognized the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow). I did not, I recognized the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier). It is up to the Member for Ottawa—Vanier now.

Mr. Gauthier: In a spirit of co-operation with my friend from Winnipeg North, and also recognizing that you will reserve my position to debate later, I will give the Hon. Member from Winnipeg North the floor.

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by saying I listened with consternation and amazement to the comments by the Hon. Member for Western Arctic (Mr. Nickerson). If there are any area, because of their geographic position and isolation, which get hit in the worst possible way by this concept of user-pay, they are those isolated areas like the Northwest Territories. Whether you look at transportation or anything else, the costs to the people who live there are much higher than everybody else. They would have to pay for the things that they get, which is what user-pay principle means I cannot understand how a Member who represents an area like that could take the very narrow,

“business is the only thing that counts”, attitude he took. He seems to be living in an era of 50 years ago. If we applied the user-pay principle to the person who got sick and had to see a doctor, or a person who had to go to hospital, or a person who had to depend on his own ability to provide for a pension after she or he retires, those people would be in a terrible situation.

I want to say a few words about this Bill and the concept of user-pay for transportation and shipping in the St. Lawrence Seaway. I want to put on the record that the opposition to that principle is not just opposition by our political Party. Let me put on the record the views expressed by the Minister of Highways and Transportation for the Province of Saskatchewan. I am sure the Hon. Member from Western Arctic knows that they have a Conservative Government. He said the following:

Any increase in costs to users of the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Seaway system will result in producers looking for transport services which are cheaper. As a result, some traffic may be diverted to the U.S. transportation system causing loss of Canadian jobs.

I have recently written to the Hon. Don Mazankowski—and advised him that the imposition of charges to defray the costs of the Coast Guard are ill advised—

We have the Western Regional Advisory Council, Alberta Economic Development, another Conservative province. They say the following:

The introduction of any regulation which will create an additional cost to the port and port users must not militate against the use of Canadian ports. We are most concerned that Clause 4 of the act which deals with cost recovery will impact negatively on Canada's international competitive position, by forcing business away.

Let me quote from the Minister of Highways and Transportation of my own province, who says the following:

If this clause in the Bill is allowed to remain, it will lead to efforts towards full cost recovery which is beyond the limited financial capabilities of grain producers and other shippers and consumers.

The continued pursuit of the “user pay” philosophy without regard for the ability of shippers and consumers to pay will inevitably cripple the flow of the nation's commerce.

The National Farmers' Union said:

In its preoccupation to trim the federal deficit, the Government is in effect telling farmers through this bill that the national interest can best be served by still further increasing farm costs at a time when farmers are in very serious financial straits.

We regard the St. Lawrence Seaway as a national asset that should be maintained in the national interest. It does not make good economic sense to raise rates in the face of declining demand.

There is no question an additional charge in any way placed on transportation at this time will in fact mean disaster to more producers. It will mean producers going broke.

● (1220)

I represent an urban constituency which has a very small number of farmers. However, I do represent many railway workers. There have been major lay-offs at CPR and CNR, the likes of which we have not seen since the 1930s. The prime reason for these lay-offs is that the shipment of grain has decreased dramatically.

Canadian wheat producers are facing very unfair competition from the United States and the European community,