

Canada Shipping Act

people who are running pleasure craft for moving tourists around Canada's great national parks in some of the most beautiful locations in our country, the fishermen, skippers of large fishing vessels or even those people who are in laser sail boats and canoes, everybody agrees that the Bill is decades old and needs to be reviewed and updated.

Having made that point about the unanimous opinion of all the clients affected by Bill C-75, that an update of Bill C-75 is required, let me hasten to add that practically without exception, which is an incredible phenomenon in itself, all of those same users and clients affected by Bill C-75 have expressed grave reservation about one particular clause in the Bill, namely, Clause 4.

As I said yesterday, Clause 4 does not result from updating, upgrading or modernizing something that heretofore existed. Clause 4 is a brand new animal that has been introduced in a Bill that otherwise, having gone through the housecleaning process, would have been one that I could have stood in my place today and supported. Clause 4 does not sound too ominous. It does not sound too threatening. Nor does it sound too devastating unless one takes the time to examine the Bill to find out exactly what the new provision is which the Minister of Transport (Mr. Mazankowski) has offered for public consumption and, indeed, for public consideration and debate in this House of Commons.

What is it, Mr. Speaker? I describe it as being akin to a gun. Anytime I am with someone to whom I pass a gun, particularly when he demands that the gun be loaded, I want to know what the target is. I want to know who is about to be shot. Clause 4 is a provision in Bill C-75 that gives the Minister of Transport the power to impose user charges for services that have historically, over the decades and down through the generations, been provided in this great marine country—the great Atlantic and Pacific coasts—as a matter of right of citizenship.

Some Members will be wondering what we are talking about. What services have been provided as a matter of right to Canadians in the country that the Minister suddenly wants to tell people they are going to pay for. What services? We are talking about aids to navigation, buoys, lighthouses, radio aids, dredging, et cetera. We are talking about ship movement systems and services. We are talking about ice-breaking, Arctic and other ship support. We are talking about—and this is the most scandalous and disappointing, this is the one that clutches at the heart—marine search and rescue. Canada will respond to the desperate and life-threatening need of one of its citizens providing that citizen is going to pay.

Mr. Forrestall: That is not true.

Mr. Tobin: We value the life, liberty, limb, health and welfare of one of our citizens providing that person is going to pay.

Mr. Forrestall: That is not so.

Mr. Tobin: It is the same kind of mentality that exists south of the border which does not have a medicare system. You are in good hands and you can have the best of service south of the border provided you have a fat wallet.

What other services is the Government going to charge for? I suggest it is public wharves and harbours, direction, administration, for a total bill now being paid out by the Government of Canada on behalf of all of our citizens to ensure that this great, not land-locked country, but I imagine—I am not quite sure—the country in the world with the largest coastline of any nation. If one looks at the Atlantic coastline, the Pacific coastline, the northern coastline and Arctic waters, there is no other nation on earth with as much coastline.

Logically, as an extension of the reality that we are a marine nation, the Government of Canada historically in its wisdom, I must say without regard to partisanship, be they PC Governments or Liberal Governments—I am sure even my colleagues in the New Democratic Party if they had an opportunity to govern would pursue this course—has provided marine services. This has been done in recognition of the reality that we are a marine nation, and with an understanding and recognizing of our environment demands—that the Government of Canada should provide facilities to ensure that our people can exist and carry on, no matter where they live.

The cost to the country of providing this infrastructure, which is a measure of sovereignty and necessary to good citizenship and commerce, which after all benefits the whole country whether you happen to live on the coastline where the goods come in or in Toronto where the goods are received, has been \$824 million. The Government of Canada has now decided that it wants to impose a user pay concept. The Government wants to recover some of those costs. That in itself is not such a shocking notion. It is questionable and debatable. One could argue whether it is possible that certain industries can afford to have this extra charge imposed on their backs over and above their personal and corporate income tax, because they thought that paying personal and corporate income tax was to look after these charges. One could perhaps argue whether it is even economically viable.

The Government is not just going to bring in these new user-pay charges, but seeks the authority in Bill C-75 to impose those charges. Yet the Government will not tell anybody in this House or anywhere else in the country what those charges are going to be until later. To go back to my analogy of the gun, the Minister is asking for the gun he is asking for the bullet in the breech, he is asking for the barrel to be primed and he will tell us later who he is shooting. As a fisherman said to me on the wharf in Little Port a few weeks ago, he is afraid that he won't know who the Minister's target is until he gets a bullet right between the eyes. It is a poor time to find out which way the gun is being aimed when you have discovered that your head has been aerated by the irresponsible aim of a Minister of Transport who has not understood the full implications of this user pay philosophy.