

Maritime Code

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. To make sure there is no disagreement or confusion, I think the minister should speak by consent. He moved the motion, and by doing so he is taken as having spoken. I would ask for unanimous consent.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): By consent.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that what you have said is technically the case, and I appreciate the consent given. I must say I am having an uneasy afternoon as a result of the disposition presently shown by members. The kind words of the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) commending me on this change in the bill have shaken me somewhat. I am delighted he has seen the usefulness of moving things out of the central core here. I need not tell hon. members about my own dedication to decentralization, to the notion that a good deal of what is done here can be gradually done elsewhere.

Having said that, I am not sure I would want to look only at the Baseline Road. Since he has decided to march me away from the central core, I will go with the hon. member for Renfrew North-Nipissing East (Mr. Hopkins) and take a look at quarters in that area. I know that hon. members will wish me to look at other places, too, for example, the banks of the Saskatchewan River in Saskatchewan, naturally, if we are not bound to consider a coastal position. I shall certainly follow the lead given me by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton in that regard.

I should like to direct a few remarks to some of the words spoken this afternoon by the hon. member for Carleton-Charlotte (Mr. McCain) and, in particular, to attempt to make the record very clear in relation to my belief in the necessity for full consultation in connection with the regulations. It should be evident that the discussions between my predecessor and the maritime premiers, and with the Newfoundland government as well, indicated an intention to consult with regard to the regulations. But there was no reservation of any kind about moving forward with the maritime code subject to the assurances on consultation. On September 24, 1973, for instance, a release following a meeting between the premiers and the then minister of transport stated:

The provinces stressed, and it was agreed, that they would participate actively in drawing up regulations governing these safeguards.

It was, therefore, in the regulations that the safeguards were to be found, not in the bill itself as might have been implied. I have, of course, received strong representations from members of parliament as well. For instance, the hon. member for Vancouver East (Mr. Lee) has spoken to me many times on this subject, drawing attention to the need to ensure that most significant changes to disadvantaged coastal shipping, or those affected by the freight rates, would be made without full consultation. I have, of course, given such an assurance myself to the ministers in recent meetings both on the west coast and on the east coast—to the eight ministers of the provinces to the west and to the east—that there would be full consultation on the regulations before they were adopted.

[Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton).]

Therefore, in answer to the hon. member for Carleton-Charlotte, I can say that full consideration will be given to his concern about pricing and cost of shipping before the regulations under this act are adopted. I am very conscious of the desirability of full consultation. My policy is, basically, one of open consultation, and in view of the apprehension regarding shipping costs and my feeling that it is important that all parties should make an input, I have undertaken with members of parliament that there shall be full consultation with them, too, prior to the move toward regulation. Indeed, I have asked for, and received agreement from two hon. members, the hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Anderson) and the hon. member for Saint John-Lancaster (Mr. Landers), that they will co-chair an informal committee of members of parliament to look at regulations.

Through this method all members who have an interest in safeguarding their regions can make an input. I know that members such as the hon. member for Carleton-Charlotte and the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forrestall) who have shown particular interest in this subject, not necessarily from identical viewpoints, will want to make an input as well.

I simply want to assure the hon. members that as this amendment moves forward, these consultations—which have been agreed to before—are now doubly assured and that it is our intention to hold the widest consultations possible before we move to specific regulations under this act.

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Dartmouth-Halifax East): In addressing myself to motion No. 9, I wonder if I may make an observation with respect to the reassurances given us just now by the minister. The difficulty faced by the maritime economy, the council of maritime premiers and the government of British Columbia, and certainly, to some degree, by the province of Quebec and the province of Newfoundland, is that the words of ministers in the government cannot be trusted. Of course the minister is sincere when he says that consultation will take place and he is setting up a committee. I might say I found that absolutely ridiculous—that he was setting up a committee headed by the hon. member for Saint John-Lancaster (Mr. Landers). I can understand his naming the hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Anderson) who does have some interest, but for the hon. member for Saint John-Lancaster to head up a committee, with the hon. member for Comox-Alberni to produce regulations under the bill, is ridiculous. I doubt whether he has even read the bill or knows anything at all about shipping. I think this would be a great insult to the former member for Saint John-Lancaster who fought both inside and outside this chamber for the re-establishment of a Canadian merchant fleet.

● (1630)

We appreciate the indication given by the minister that he will let the members of this chamber make some consultative input on the question of regulations, but our concern is that the government must demonstrate its intentions in some way or another, and not simply with words, which have nothing to do with what the CNR will charge for the movement of a carload of potatoes or a boat load of lumber from the west coast of Canada to the east coast. The words