

Canada Shipping Act

of the expenditures incurred in regionalizing the Canadian Coast Guard?

● (1200)

Mr. Speaker, I could go on like this for a good ten minutes merely listing the issues raised by Clause 4. But in conclusion, I will give you a final instance in which it seems extremely complex and disquieting, even shocking to leave such an important matter to the discretion of the minister, with no way for this House, for us, Members of Parliament, to participate and defend the interests they are representing. The following example is given: Admittedly, a major part of winter expenses of the Canadian Coast Guard on the St. Lawrence River goes to environment protection—opening up the channel for the water to flow faster and without ice jams. Certainly, the movement of large container and other ships also makes a major contribution to de-icing the St. Lawrence River. The daily traffic of large ships contributes to and is in itself a de-icing operation. Will they be refunded that part for which they contributed to that vital work, or will the Canadian Coast Guard benefit from the work that is in effect done by the large carriers?

All those questions remain unanswered, Mr. Speaker. All are concerns for those interested in transportation, all are also matters that are very disquieting for fishermen and a large part of our population, for those men and women living in Northern Canada, Northern Quebec, who depend on water transportation for food supplies. Clearly, if the charge is to be increased to the point where it becomes a major component, this will lead to substantial increases in the price of goods that are transported along the Seaway, and accordingly Canadian men and women in those areas will have to pay the greater part of the costs.

Another matter that seems important to me is that in the area of shipping, as in transportation in general, operators usually run on one-, two-, three-, or five-year contracts. Here is the situation. Once a company has obtained a two-, or three-year contract for shipping goods from one point to another, His Highness the minister suddenly decides from high above that he will increase the rates, after consulting a few officials who know nothing about the problem. Have you thought for a minute of the various consequences? In my view, this might very well disrupt an industry which is already very much affected and which does not need such confusion and complexity.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I submit it is really sad that a significant number of good aspects of Bill C-75 are spoiled by such provisions that are both unreasonable and unacceptable as far as elementary democracy is concerned.

[English]

Mr. Dave Nickerson (Western Arctic): Mr. Speaker, I listened attentively, as I always do, to the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans). He made some good points but he did not carry his analogies far enough. He said that a person involved in an automobile accident might expect the

police to provide certain emergency or safety services without charge. If you were in a car accident, the car was on fire and you were trapped inside, the police might be expected to extinguish the fire and extricate you from the vehicle. They might be expected to provide traffic directions around the scene of the accident. They do all all this at public expense and no expense to the person involved in the accident.

● (1210)

There are certain things that might be undertaken for which you would expect to pay. You would expect to pay, for example, the ambulance charges if you had to go to a hospital. You would not expect the police or some public body to pay for the towing charge of your car to be taken to the garage. You certainly would not expect any repairs on the car to be done at public expense.

We have the same types of concepts involved in what we are debating with respect to Coast Guard services here today. The Government obviously has no intention of levying a charge for those immediate emergency and safety services. What the Government might want to make a charge for is certain commercial types of services rendered by the Coast Guard. This is where the Opposition fails to make that distinction.

Charges for ice-breaking, towing, sounding, in many cases make eminent good sense. I have had occasion in the past to contract with a navigation company to go into areas that were not sounded. They have to sound the channel and they make an extra charge for that. The vessels have to slow down to get into that area and they have to take soundings as they go along. It makes sense that they should charge extra for that service. It would not make sense for me to be able to call up the Coast Guard and say, "Go and sound that channel", and the public is going to pay for it, as it is a commercial undertaking on my part. I am the one that is going to benefit from the shipping that takes place and nobody else. It would make eminent sense in that circumstance if the Coast Guard were to provide that service that I should have to pay for it.

The same can be said for certain ice-breaking services. If you accidentally get stuck in an ice-pack, you want to be able to call the Coast Guard to come to break the ice and get you out of there. That is an emergency type of undertaking. If you know that you want to ship out a cargo of goods, or get some merchandise out of a location that is ice-bound and you know of this in advance you can either contract with a privately-owned ice-breaker to go in and escort your cargo-carrying vessel, or maybe you can get the Coast Guard to do it. If the Coast Guard does it, why should it be done at public expense? Of course it should not. It should be paid for by the person who reaps the commercial advantage. That is all that has been said in the provisions that have been presented here by the Government. In circumstances like that where it is a commercial-type service that has been rendered by the Coast Guard then there ought to be a schedule of fees. It ought not to be done at the expense of the taxpayer. The person who receives