

Adjournment Debate

he assure the House that the long-term economic benefit of Newfoundlanders and their province will be the guiding criteria in assessing who should get that refinery?

If those kinds of criteria are not in place, we shall see the possibility of opportunities lost, the ability to create jobs lost, and an even stronger sense on the part of Newfoundlanders, who live far away from the centre but nevertheless are as proud Canadians as anyone, that this country does not work for them when it can and when it should.

Mr. G. M. Gurbin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I would like to strike a small deal with the Hon. Member for Humber-Port au Port-St. Barbe (Mr. Tobin). I would like to help him with his anxiety attack, as long as I get from him an assurance that he will not raise unnecessary anxiety in the people who live in his Province of Newfoundland.

I give him the assurance which he asked of the Minister. There has been no deal struck. There has been no limitation of any option as to what might happen in terms of the future of that refinery. All options are open. The Hon. Member should recognize very clearly, being the astute representative he is, that it would be very untimely to start talking about specific details of any one option. Those matters rest in the hands of those who must make the final decision. All options are open. There is no limitation.

For the second half of our deal, the Hon. Member should look back at his question and realize that he tried to indicate that somehow the future of the refinery will determine the future of Newfoundland's relationship to the Hibernia oil fields. I would like to make very clear, in accordance with statements the Minister has made many times, that that in no way has there been any implication, and there will in no way be any reflection on the ability of Newfoundland to have its options in terms of Hibernia. In fact, as the Minister has stated, there is a very clear ability on the part of Newfoundland to have an option of first refusal for offshore supplies, as provided in the Atlantic Accord. The Atlantic Accord in itself assures that the interests of Newfoundland are and always will be protected.

I know the Hon. Member would want to fulfil his margin of the small deal which we have just struck by ensuring that his constituents know that Newfoundland is well looked after by its many representatives in the House of Commons, and that there will be no deals struck which are not in their long-term best interests.

RAILWAYS—ATLANTIC LIMITED—REQUEST FOR RESTORATION
OF SERVICE

Mr. Bob Corbett (Fundy-Royal): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to deal with the Government's commitment to return the service of the Atlantic Limited to the Maritimes and Upper Canada. Prior to the last election the Conservative Party committed itself to restoring that service. I am absolutely delighted and extremely proud the Government has done just that. The service will be restored as of June 1. It

is certainly an indication of the sincerity of the Government in terms of fulfilling its commitments. This is one of many pledges the Progressive Conservative Party undertook prior to the last election, prior to forming the Government, which it has honoured throughout its early term of office. They certainly are to be congratulated for doing just that.

● (1815)

There are a number of concerns that have been expressed by numerous constituents of the maritime region who will once again be able to enjoy the use of this train from Halifax via Saint John on its way to Montreal. It is important that we ensure that the restoration of this train is in such a fashion that it will be utilized to its fullest extent. I would like to bring to the attention of the Minister, through the Parliamentary Secretary, just a few of those concerns, two specific and one general.

The specific concern I refer to is the apparent intention of VIA rail at the beginning to have only three agents at the VIA rail station in the city of Saint John. When the rail service was discontinued there were seven passenger agents, some of whom doubled as baggage assistants. The concern is quite obvious. If the service is to be utilized to its fullest extent and to its best opportunity, obviously the service people must be in place to ensure that the train runs on time. People must not be inconvenienced by poor service at the ticket counter. Tickets should be readily available. There should not be an opinion formed of VIA rail that the service is less than first class and, therefore, a disincentive to people to use the line. This is basically what my entire address is about this evening. I ask the Minister to look at the staffing positions in the City of Saint John at the VIA rail station to ensure that sufficient people are in place to service the needs.

Second, apparently the baggage car is not going to be manned between several stations along the way, for example, between Saint John and Moncton. This means that people who get on the train at Sussex, which is a focal point in Fundy-Royal, are not going to be able to check their luggage. Their luggage will have to be placed in the car in which their accommodation is, whether it be the day coach, sleeping car or whatever. This will be a terrible inconvenience to a great number of people.

It is extremely important that the baggage car be accessible at all points at which this train will make stops along the route so that people will not be inconvenienced, with another disincentive to people to use that line. After all, if ridership is down, there will be those who will point and say that the service is not good, that it should never have been restored. Therefore, we must make every effort to ensure that the service is there.

Another matter of concern is that there must be some attention paid to restoring the equipment. For the most part, the equipment is 30 years old. When it was announced that the service would be reinstated there was a commitment on the part of the Government to put a fair amount of money into the kitty for restoring the old cars and replacing the old engines. For example, more than \$3 million will be spent to refurbish