

shipbuilding rationalization program. Put another way, it is pay-offs or lay-offs. That is exactly what it is doing.

The federal government currently is negotiating with the Halifax-Dartmouth Industries Ltd., a very good company which operates two shipyards: one on the Halifax side of the harbour and the other on the Dartmouth side. The Dartmouth side is called the Dartmouth Marine Slips. The individuals who work at the Dartmouth Marine Slips are hanging on by a thread because the federal government is trying to entice HDIL to close one of its yards. Why does it want a yard closed? It says it is because there is not enough business to go around.

If the government had the intestinal fortitude it should have in trying to protect viable Canadian industries, there would be all kinds of work for yards like the Dartmouth Marine Slips and the 130-odd workers who have worked there for God knows how long and may find themselves out of a job, because instead of addressing the real problem which is highly subsidized foreign competition in shipyards, it is prepared to lay off and give a few bucks over to HDIL to sort of put a few more pieces of equipment on the Halifax side.

The net result, because this government has failed to come to grips with the necessity of having a national shipbuilding program, is that yards across Canada are shutting down. The individuals who work in those yards are not easily transferred over to other parts of the private sector or the industrial infrastructure because they are highly skilled individuals in specific skills necessary in some cases only in shipbuilding.

Although this bill goes somewhat to try to revitalize the Canadian shipbuilding industry, it completely ignores the reality that there are lots of companies in Canada that do international shipping from Canada. This bill certainly does absolutely nothing to try to rebalance the playing field so that any vessels that those companies are using are built in Canadian shipyards.

I am going to give a pretty startling fact. My colleagues from Ottawa and from Burin—St. George's and I did a little tour of the Atlantic shipyards not that long ago. It was perhaps a month and a half ago and one thing just struck me as incredibly odd. I live on the ocean and every

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time I look out my window I see a ship. We went and toured Halifax-Dartmouth Industries on the Halifax side and on the Dartmouth side. The Dartmouth side basically had no work, and over on the Halifax side they were doing some work on a tug, I think it was. What they told us was that that small little tug boat was the only non-governmental ship, in other words the only commercial ship being built in Canada today.

My goodness, if we have thousands of ships plying our waters on both coasts and up in the Arctic, I suppose, why in the name of goodness is it that we are losing thousands of employees almost every other year in the shipbuilding industry? It is because the government has simply refused to come back and admit that perhaps what it should have done back in 1984 was to look at some type of subsidization for Canadian shipyards so that we could compete; not just compete for the construction of coastal vessels that will be licensed to operate in Canadian waters but to compete internationally.

We have great technology in this country. If anybody doubts that, he or she should go down to Saint John Shipbuilding in New Brunswick. It will outrank almost any shipbuilding yard in the country. Let us look at the skill level and the productivity our shipyards on the Atlantic Coast have provided. We are a known commodity. We are known around the world, but the Canadian government is so hell-bent on ensuring that government retrenches on all of its fiscal and financial responsibilities from any type of industry subsidization that it basically allowed tens of thousands of jobs to be put at risk in Canada's shipbuilding industry and to be exported offshore.

• (1310)

In conclusion, I would hope some of the loopholes which appear to be in this bill will never be used. I think my colleague from Ottawa initially proposed a motion, but I do not think it has gone anywhere. I am sure it was not accepted. One of the things we are concerned about is that some people want to get an exemption to this particular legislation by saying that they have a very specific requirement on a very specific type of vessel that is simply not available and that the minister has a responsibility, a requirement to issue a licence.