

Marine Atlantic Inc.

to operate. If someone were to place me in charge of the position today, in a part-time capacity—and I wish they would—with no pay, I would look at what would have to be done in order to actually supply the service. The needs of the people would have to be satisfied.

Do you know, Mr. Speaker, that for the last two months on this service the boats with cabins have been on the day run? The boats with no cabins have been on the night run. That is what has been going on for the last two months at CN Marine. A constituent of mine phoned me up and said: "George, you have to do something about this. I am taking my family across the gulf, but we can't get a cabin because there are no cabins on the night crossing ferry. They told us that if we wanted a cabin we would have to wait until the next morning". I phoned up CN Marine and I said: "Look, I just had a crank call from someone. They are telling bad stories about you. I have just been told that your policy with respect to getting a cabin in which to get some sleep is that you have to take the day ferry". The lady at the other end of the line said: "Mr. Baker, oh yes, that is right". I said: "Really?" She said: "Yes". I said: "When was this policy initiated?" She said: "Oh, a couple of months ago". I said: "There is obviously no problem getting a cabin to go to sleep in during the daytime". She replied: "No, sir, not at all. In fact, they are not being used up and I don't know why".

To answer the hon. gentleman's question with respect to what you have to sleep off—

Mr. Waddell: They're your words.

Mr. Baker: The hon. gentleman was probably talking about the bar. The bar closes at, I believe, 12:30 or one o'clock. It is good that the bar does close because the best sleeping space is on the floor in the bar. The benches in the bar are more comfortable. In fact, everyone rushes to the bar when it closes.

I hope that with the creation of this Crown corporation some changes can be made. If some changes are not made, then I will have camera crews down there. That is what we should have done a long time ago. We cannot pretend that this is some riverboat in some part of China or Africa or some place like that, that it is just a pleasure jaunt and people are kind of tired after travelling all day and they wish to sleep on the floor. I hope that will be corrected. If it is not we will have to get some camera crews down there in order to have film clips to show on the national news just so the rest of the country will know what is going on.

Mr. Mantha: We enjoyed the Hon. Member's lively speech, Mr. Speaker. I wish to ask the Hon. Member about the Pope coming here and the crazy schedule in terms of people getting to see the Pope. Was that the schedule of the previous Government, in all fairness, or was it this Government's? I do not want to put the Hon. Member on the spot.

Mr. Baker: The what?

Mr. Mantha: The Pope. You said a little while ago that the people came to see the Pope.

● (1240)

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, sometimes I do have a Newfoundland accent. When I get a bit fired up or start talking about something that has to do with Newfoundland that is not right, my words kind of twist. Perhaps when I said "boat", it came out like "pope".

In any event, the Hon. Member asked if this was the case under the previous Government. That is a good question. In fact, I have been waiting for someone to ask that question. Yes, Mr. Speaker, it was.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, I have been here for years. It was frustrating, to no end, to try to convince the political powers to actually get their fingers into the operations of Crown corporations. It was never that Government's policy to do that.

What has changed is that before there were some cabins available and the rest of the people had to sleep on the floor, if they wanted to sleep. But since this Government took over, and in the last two months, all of the beds are on the day-boat and there are no beds on the night crossing. That is obviously a step backward, would you not agree, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Forrestall: Mr. Speaker, never in my 53 years of life have I ever met a Newfoundlander who could not entertain on such little evidence.

Mr. Waddell: Mr. Speaker, I would like to put another question to the Hon. Member. Pardon my ignorance, but I will put the question anyway. Why could the provinces not run these ferries? The province runs the ferry in British Columbia, and it is much closer to the people. Perhaps we should consider decentralizing ferry services. What about a co-operative running the ferry system? We could privatize it and let the people run it as opposed to the Ottawa bureaucrats.

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question. The only problem is that in British Columbia we are talking about intraprovincial ferry services, whereas on the East coast we are talking about interprovincial ferry services. One, of course, is controlled by the provincial Government and the other by the federal Government. However, there are still a couple of ferry services within provinces operated by the federal Government. The Government has been trying to get away from those services over the years, and certainly this Government will make sure it does so, and perhaps even in the case of the ferries in British Columbia, though the federal Government pays a certain portion of the costs of operating the ferry system.

Certainly the provinces are closer to the operation. The only problem for Newfoundland is that ferry boats are operated at a tremendous deficit. It is the constitutional responsibility of the federal Government to operate the ferry boats, but it is certainly not the constitutional responsibility of the federal Government to operate those services at a profit or a break-