

its obligation to deliver its passengers. Sometimes you may leave the aircraft and spend a night in a hotel at the expense of Air Canada. You may end up on a bus or on a train but you will arrive at your destination. They will get you there. I think Canadian National was obligated in this regard to deliver merchandise that had been accepted in good faith from shippers, that had been shipped in good faith and that had been ordered by the consignees in good faith. That moral obligation to deliver was completely ignored. Now, just because it happens to be election year in Newfoundland, the government in Newfoundland has decided that it will take on the obligation of delivering such merchandise and it will deliver it, if you like, via Air Canada; they will use Air Canada. The Newfoundland will pay that airline to fulfil the obligation which had rested on Canadian National.

I can only say that I will not say anything about Air Canada at this time. May I add my voice to those who are urging the Minister of Transport to start making decisions and to come up with his regional air policy. Let him enunciate the policy that he is always referring to, so that we shall know where we are going and by what means. I cannot urge the minister too strongly at this point, especially since he has talked about this policy so long, to make his decision and bring forward his policy. Let us have it.

If it were not a gesture—and I have no desire to delay the House—I would move an amendment. I will not do that. Nevertheless, the amendment that I would have moved if my moving of it were not a gesture, would be that the amount requested by CNR and Air Canada be reduced to \$1—if I had my way it would be even less—and not increased until such time as CNR and Air Canada decide to live up to their responsibilities in Canada's newest province.

● (9:40 p.m.)

Mr. Walter C. Carter (St. John's West): Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss in my duty if I were to allow this debate to end without making a few comments on the operations of the CN in my province and specifically in my riding. My riding of St. John's West is very much concerned about the operations of the CN; a large number of people in the area depend on employment with the company to make a living. Of course, the story of the great train robbery in Newfoundland in 1969 has been told many times in this House. Indeed, tonight my hon. friend from Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador (Mr. Peddle) spoke at length concerning the system with which we now have to contend in Newfoundland, that is, a bus passenger service inaugurated by Canadian National to replace the traditional passenger service which we enjoyed in the province for so long.

Certain aspects of the story of the abandonment of rail passenger service in Newfoundland bear repeating. Most hon. members, I am sure, will recall that during the debate on the railway financing bill in 1969 members on this side of the House urged the government and the CTC to reconsider the abandonment of rail passenger service in Newfoundland. My hon. friends and I, support-

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ed by the vast majority of our fellow Newfoundlanders, objected very strongly to the proposed bus service on the grounds that neither the terrain nor the climatic conditions of the province would lend themselves to such a service. Today, with just two winters behind us, we find that our fears were justified. My hon. friend from Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador pointed out that there have been several accidents, several near-tragedies. On one occasion a bus disappeared with all its passengers for some 12 hours.

When the debates took place concerning the abandonment of our rail service we were the butt of jokes by hon. members opposite who were amused by our antics, as they called them, in our efforts to retain that which was our own.

An hon. Member: Even the Minister of Transport.

Mr. Carter: Even the Minister of Transport (Mr. Jamieson). We now find they are laughing on the other side of their faces because hardly a day passes when we do not hear complaints from them about the proposed abandonment of rail passenger services in their own provinces. This is extremely serious. We in Newfoundland were the guinea pigs in a plan by the CN to abolish its rail passenger service.

I endorse the comments of my hon. friend from St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) when he referred to the efforts of the CN to downgrade the coastal boat service in Newfoundland. It is obvious to even the smallest child in Newfoundland that Canadian National is deliberately downgrading this service and discouraging patronage with a view to eliminating the service. I would not be at all surprised to learn that this is their intention also with regard to the hotel service in St. John's. I should like the minister to give us an assurance in the committee that it is not intended to downgrade the hotel service in Newfoundland or to downgrade the coastal boat service. I want him to assure us that the company will make every effort to improve these services, thereby assuring their success.

I should like to refer now to the CN dock facilities in St. John's. This dock is a major contributor to the economy of my riding; indeed, it is a major contributor to the economy of Newfoundland generally. But I feel that the full potential of this dock and the full potential of St. John's as the so-called service station of the Atlantic is not being realized because of inadequate facilities at the dock. We have tradesmen working at the dock who are second to none in Canada, men of long service and training who can take their place alongside any in the country. But they are handicapped because of the antiquated system employed and the indifference shown by the CN in the docking facilities.

I have been told by officials that almost weekly a large volume of business is turned away from the facility, enough to give full employment to all the people working there plus a large number of others who could be engaged. I urge the Minister of Transport, and Canadian National, to realize the full potential of the St. John's