

That decision was taken in 1948 and 1949 when we decided to join Confederation.

During the course of the Confederation debate one evening in a rowdy chamber much like this one, a very famous, highly honoured Newfoundlander named Gordon Bradley, who was chairman of the commission that discussed Newfoundland's entry into Confederation, or possible joining with the United States, rose and said to Hon. Members who were assembled and were making a great deal of noise: "I remind Members that the eyes and the ears of the people of Newfoundland are upon us this evening." He went on to say: "They are watching us. They are weighing our every word. I warn Members that sometimes we try their patience much too far".

● (2150)

I want to say to the Hon. Member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie) that this evening the eyes and ears of the people of Newfoundland were on him. They were watching him. They have been weighing his words. They wanted to know tonight, once and for all, whether or not the Hon. Member for St. John's West was Newfoundland's cabinet representative in Ottawa or Ottawa's apologist in Newfoundland. After this evening we know that the Member is Ottawa's apologist in Newfoundland. The Member cannot make up for in volume, like a wounded bear brawling and bawling, what he lacks in substance in participating in the debate tonight.

I should like to refer the House to a story which appeared in the *Times Transcript* on December 6 past. It reads:

Three Atlantic fishermen's organizations told the federal Government in Ottawa Friday not to give in to threats made by France to cancel inter-governmental agreements if the fishing dispute surrounding St. Pierre and Miquelon is not settled to France's satisfaction.

Gilles Theriault, executive-director of the Maritime Fisherman's Union, reminded Fisheries Minister Thomas Siddon that French cabinet minister Bernard Pons warned publicly that if the fishing dispute is not settled to their satisfaction, it could force the French Government to revise certain economic, cultural and co-operation agreements that exist between the two governments.

They warned that if the agreement was not settled to France's satisfaction, the French could potentially cancel the visit of French Prime Minister Jacques Chirac.

That is what was at stake in this dispute, whether or not the Prime Minister's chance to host the Francophone summit in Quebec City this September, the first time ever in our history, would be put at risk because the Government of Canada stood up for the interests of Newfoundlanders and Atlantic Canadians. That is what was at risk, and the Government of Canada ran with its tail between its legs.

I said that I was sad this evening. In all the years I have watched the Hon. Member for St. John's West in politics, I have not always agreed with him. However, I have always admired that he was prepared to stand and be counted. I want to know on what road the Hon. Member for St. John's West travelled since early this morning when he was on VOCM's open line show in Newfoundland and when he made his speech in the House tonight. The Hon. Member has undergone some kind of dramatic conversion.

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This morning, speaking in Newfoundland and talking about the agreement which he defended tonight, the Hon. Member told the people of Newfoundland in respect of the lack of consultation given to the Government of Newfoundland, the union, and the other Atlantic provinces: "I can't see any legitimate defence of the fact that they were not present at this particular meeting, so I can well understand why they should be annoyed and upset with that". That was the Hon. Member speaking this morning in Newfoundland. What else did he say—

Mr. Forrestall: What did he say tonight?

Mr. Tobin: The Member should be quiet, should listen and learn. What else did he say this morning? He said: "Let's just say that those responsible for this are certainly insensitive to the importance of the issue in Newfoundland and Labrador". That is quite a different song than the one the Hon. Member for St. John's West sang in the House tonight.

What else did the Member say about this deal? Speaking on behalf of himself and his two Conservative colleagues from Newfoundland, what did he say about this deal this morning in Newfoundland in front of a different audience than the audience he addressed tonight in the House of Commons? What did he say? He said: "As you know, if we are to have as one of our objectives better and improved federal-provincial relations, which has been one of the hallmarks so far, this is hardly the way to go about it. So to say that the Newfoundland caucus, for example, is upset would be putting it very mildly".

I want to know what kind of placebo, what kind of salutary pill, or what kind of depressant was slipped to the Hon. Member for St. John's West between nine o'clock this morning in Newfoundland when he was outraged in defence of Newfoundlanders and tonight when he appeared in the House like a wounded bear braying in volume, attempting to make up for in volume what he lacks in integrity and backbone to defend the people of Newfoundland. That is what I want to know, and that is what Newfoundlanders want to know.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I know the Hon. Member is making a forceful speech on a matter of great importance to the Hon. Member and also, I think Hon. Members would know, of great importance to the Minister who has just spoken. I would caution the Hon. Member not to go too far in impugning the integrity, motivation, or honour of another Hon. Member.

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, I would much rather be standing tonight in the House and joining with my fellow Members of Parliament from Newfoundland and with Members of Parliament from Atlantic Canada to ensure that, as we were elected to do, we were representing the interests of our people and seeing a wrong put right. I would rather be standing as one in the pursuit of that goal. I would much rather not be standing here to try to dissemble this patently weak and disappointing defence of a sell-out which was mounted by a