

happen—wrote off the debts for the Canadian ports, the debt they wrote off for the port of Montreal was in the area of \$600 million. The debt they wrote off for the port of Halifax was in the area of \$100 million. I have the statistics. I presented them years ago to the House, but that is the kind of thing that has happened.

But the big gripe, the continuing gripe, the everyday gripe is the facilities that are made available to the port of Montreal for ice-breaking and navigation. Let me tell you as quickly as possible why that complaint exists.

Halifax is one of the greatest deep water ports in the world. You can get any kind of ship, any size of ship in. Mr. Speaker, as you are from Edmonton you may not be interested in this; you couldn't get a rowboat into Edmonton. In the port of Halifax any day of the week, any time of the day, you can get the largest ship in the world right up to the dock, no problem at all.

You cannot do that in the port of Saint John. I am not going to argue that point. But, in order to get that kind of vessel into the port of Montreal, you pretty nearly have to pick it up and carry it in. It is not quite that bad, but you have to have all kinds of navigational aids. You have to have all kinds of harbour dredging. You have to have all kinds of assistance, and you have to keep the shipping lane free of ice. Who does that for the port of Montreal? The taxpayers of Canada do it for the port of Montreal, because the Government of Canada provides that service and it is not charged to anybody. What we say in the Port of Halifax is: charge those services out to the users.

It is unbelievable from the perspective of Edmonton. For years the port of Halifax was saying: "charge those expenses out to the shippers, charge those expenses out to the users of the facilities". For years the Liberal government refused to do that. Finally, when the Conservative government came to power in 1984, it said that it was time to end this anomaly. It was time to end this unlevel field. It was time to create a proper atmosphere for competition.

The Government of Canada brought in Canada Shipping Act changes in Bill C-75. In that act there was placed a provision that would allow for services such as ice-breaking and navigation to be charged back to the users. The international shipping companies, from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, Europe, Hapag Lloyd from Hamburg—all those organizations—would have to pay the cost of ice-breaking, navigational aids and so on.

Government Orders

Do you know what happened? I do not want to embarrass the member from Newfoundland, but another member from Newfoundland, from Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, personally, individually stopped the passage of this legislation in this House of Commons by standing up for seven hours on third reading and stopping that legislation.

Do you know what he said in the House of Commons on October 31, 1986, which was more or less something he said earlier on June 27, 1986? He said that there was no way the Liberal Party was going to allow such a provision to be passed.

He said on June 27, 1986: "I think it is extremely important that the record be set straight, because we would not want the House to inadvertently or accidentally get the impression that anyone in Canada is warped enough or misinformed enough to endorse clause 4 of Bill C-75".

Later, on another occasion, October 31, 1986, he spoke of Bill C-75, clause 4, and he said: "That bill died on the vine because we in the Liberal Party opposed it". The Liberal Party opposed clause 4 of Bill C-74, which he said in his speech would allow the imposition of user fees. He said: "User fees for what?" User fees for Coast Guard service, navigational aids and ice-breaking services.

A member from Atlantic Canada stopped the legislative position that would have allowed for a level field between the port of Halifax and other east coast ports and the port of Montreal. It is on record; it is undeniable. Today, five years later and for the last 500 years since John Cabot or somebody sailed up some kind of strait, the port of Montreal has had an advantage over the port of Halifax. We can lay the blame on the Liberal Party of Canada.

They are still at it. They are still stopping measures that could be used to rebuild the competitive base, that could give the port certain advantage, that could provide for offsets to the At and East, that could get us on with the business of improving the port of Halifax.

Let me tell you what the most serious difficulty is now. It is inland transportation. It is the Canadian National Railway system. Unless the Canadian National Railway changes its attitude, unless it provides better facilities, unless we get better service through double stacking, rail