

*Marine Atlantic Inc.*

was a majority report which the Government flatly rejected but which the union was reluctantly prepared to accept. That report would have begun to bridge the gap between east and west in the Department of Transport, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Department of Public Works. Those workers were so frustrated with the way the federal Government handled the negotiations that they left their jobs. I do not want to see that happen with this new Crown corporation. I do not want to see Marine Atlantic use this as an excuse to reduce wages and benefits if they find it necessary to do some rationalization.

We all recognize that this modern environment of technological change, particularly in the marine sector, leads to change in labour allocation. However, we have to be sure we look after those people who become redundant. What an awful term. How would you like to be referred to as redundant? I do not think any of us would. We have to look for a new term which clearly indicates the status of those positions, not the employees but those positions, the need for which is no longer there. We have to provide early-out options at a decent level, and which are not then penalized by the Minister of Employment and Immigration. We have to make sure that our people are protected. I do not say "our people" in the sense that they are members of a union or because they are from Atlantic Canada, but because they are Canadians and deserve respect and fair treatment.

The final thing I want to deal with is, again, the question of rates and services. The Liberal Party spokesman raised the issue of the Nielsen task force report. He talked about the cutting of services. There are many ways to cut services. The post office is talking about alternate day delivery. That is one way. Another way was announced by Marine Atlantic last fall when it said it was going to start shutting down the ferry a little earlier. It is going to cut six and a half hours off the time when you cannot travel from point to point. Can you imagine if the Government of Alberta closed the highways at ten thirty at night and you were not allowed to travel, or if you were the owner of a trucking company? In northern Ontario we see it all the time, trucking companies that travel at night because they can make better time when there is less congestion. Quite frankly, this makes it safer for you and I in our little cars to have fewer of them on the road in the day time.

• (1210)

They do not have that opportunity in Atlantic Canada. They do not have 24-hour service. Marine Atlantic is proposing even less service. We have to be careful that, because we are allowing Marine Atlantic to be carved off from CN, they remain not only technically responsible and legally responsible, but morally responsible to this House and through this House to the people of Canada to ensure that they provide the same level of service that everybody else in the country enjoys, and to ensure that they do so at a cost to the individual that is not any more or less than the cost to any other Canadians, whether they be in Thunder Bay, Edmonton, Winnipeg or Toronto.

Those are the things that Marine Atlantic must adhere to, but they cannot do it by themselves. The Government of Canada sets the rules. If the Government of Canada says there has to be user-pay for the Coast Guard services, if they say there has to be user-pay for the users of the ferries in Atlantic Canada, then they have to accept the reality at election time that there is another form of user-pay, and that is the users of the service will pay that Government back by voting for somebody else. The Government should keep that in mind as they move to this kind of legislation.

I look forward with interest to the rest of the debate. I suspect it will continue until sometime this afternoon at least, and it should be very interesting.

**Mr. George Baker (Gander—Twillingate):** Mr. Speaker, the Bill before the House today will in effect really not change anything. Most people in mainland Canada—as we say in Newfoundland, the mainlanders—would know of the service that is talked about in this Bill if they have ever travelled to the islands of the East coast of Canada. If you have ever gone to Newfoundland by car you would know that you put your car on the ferry boat at North Sydney, and then you travel 100 miles across the Atlantic Ocean to Port-aux-Basques. It is a hundred-mile journey, and it is an incredible trip. If you are ever looking for a place to go to watch whales this is the place. If you have your family with you then you can actually see the whales during the summer months. This is nothing new to me. I cannot really comprehend why a lot of people like watching whales. I suppose it is because they have never seen wild whales before in the ocean, but being a Newfoundlander I have seen them all my life. I do not take any great pleasure in watching whales. A lot of people do, so it is a great trip to take. You go 100 miles across the Atlantic Ocean. If you take the alternate ferry route it will actually be more than 100 miles, in fact a couple of hundred miles across the Atlantic. Then you go down to the Argentia ferry station in Newfoundland. It is a great trip to take. I can think of no other place in Canada to go in the summer months with your family that would be more enjoyable than Newfoundland using this service we are talking about here today in this House.

There are some problems that I should perhaps tell the House just in case Members think about taking that trip this summer, and then relate to taking the ferry boat to Newfoundland. It takes about seven or eight hours. The new boat, which is being launched today in St. John's by the Minister of Transport (Mr. Mazankowski), is supposed to be a faster, reducing the time, I understand, to five or six hours. That is neither here nor there. The Minister of Transport will stand up in St. John's today and say it is going to reduce the time to five hours. It is five hours if you are talking about May, June, July, August, September, October. If you go at any time other than that, then it is going to take anywhere from five to 20 hours, depending on the time of year. Sometimes you have ice that has to be bypassed, and in some cases it will take you anywhere from 15 to 20 hours.