

Another important factor in our province is the coastal fleet. I wish to take a few moments to explain what it represents to us. We have 7,000 miles of coastline around the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Along that coast we have approximately 1,000 settlements, some small and some large. Under the Terms of Union in 1949, the Canadian government undertook to provide good passenger and freight service to and from our province and around our province. Although both Canadian National and the Minister of Transport will deny this, we now find that there appears to be a move afoot to phase out the coastal service which looks after the transportation needs of people living in a large number of these 1,000 communities that dot the coastline.

Since 1956, eleven ships have been discarded and taken out of service completely, with only three replacements being provided. This would suggest that Canadian National is now about to do the same thing with our coastal fleet service as it did with our railway passenger service in 1969 and 1970. Canadian National is now subcontracting some of this work to private ship owners. Of course, in this way control over the quality of service is lost by Canadian National.

Under the Terms of Union the federal government has a definite obligation to ensure that this service is maintained. Canada obligated itself to provide an adequate passenger and freight service to and from our province. At that time we were not dealing with Canadian National. Now, the Minister of Transport tries to shed the government's responsibility, pointing to the inability of Canadian National to provide adequate ships. I repeat that the people of Newfoundland did not negotiate with Canadian National; they negotiated with the Canadian Government.

We negotiated with the government of Canada which at that time gave an undertaking—not subject to the whims of Canadian National, not subject to there being no strikes by Canadian National, and not subject to the dictates of Canadian National,—but that the government would provide a first rate service to our province to move passengers and freight. I contend it has fallen down on that obligation because the service we are now getting is anything but adequate. Indeed, it is very inadequate.

It is becoming more obvious to those of us who live in the so-called have-not areas, the disadvantaged, underdeveloped parts of this country, that we are supposed to continue to be the tools of Upper Canada, that we are not supposed to become developed to the point where we might provide competition to other parts of Canada which traditionally have used the Atlantic area as a dumping ground for their goods. This is a sad commentary on Confederation, that certain parts of Canada appear to be kept underdeveloped, appear not to be encouraged to become developed simply because of the whims of the vested interests and the power brokers in central Canada, particularly those in the federal cabinet.

Before closing I have a few other points I wish to mention. I wish to refer specifically to the Canadian National dock operation in St. John's. I understand that this is the only operation of its kind under the jurisdiction of Canadian National. The reason for that is that Canadian National inherited the dockyard at the time of Confederation. St. John's, the riding which I have the honour to

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represent, could very well become the service station of the Atlantic so far as shipping and ship repairs are concerned. Our position on the Atlantic lends itself completely to our becoming that, but despite the great potential of the area and of the dockyard, very few improvements have been made at the dockyard since Confederation. Machinery has become obsolete. There has been no worthwhile expansion, or extensions, no great effort by Canadian National to get business for the dockyard, or to advertise its services and its strategic position. Consequently, I fear that it will eventually be phased out.

We find that the morale of the people working there is very low. They are unhappy because, as the hon. member for Skeena said earlier, there appear to be more chiefs than Indians. If you walk through this operation you see a lot more white hats than yellow hats on the job. The workers are becoming unhappy and disenchanted. This is unfortunate because the dockyard represents an important part of the economy of St. John's, of my riding, and of Newfoundland in general. If the government and Canadian National do not inject new life into this operation, advertise its potential and capability, I am afraid it will disappear. This will be unfortunate because of the serious effect it will have on the economy of the province, and particularly on the city of St. John's.

● (1640)

In the terms of union between Newfoundland and Canada, the province undertook to do certain things. We have not reneged on our commitments, Mr. Speaker. The Canadian government undertook to provide certain services, and I contend now that it has reneged, particularly in respect of its transportation policy, to the detriment of the province. Like the other maritime provinces, Newfoundland cannot achieve its true potential without an efficient, modern transportation service. It can never hope to attain the status of a "have" province unless and until the federal government recognizes its responsibility as far as transportation is concerned. The situation is unfortunate and I suppose it prevails in other parts of the country as well.

I am not suggesting that ours is the only province with transportation problems or the only province that has a fight with Canadian National. I have listened to other members so I know that the same situation prevails pretty well right across Canada. But, Mr. Speaker, our province depends very much on a transportation service. It is an island, so we cannot jump in our cars in St. John's and drive to Toronto; we have to contend with the 90 miles of water that separates Newfoundland from the mainland of Canada. That is why I think this government has a very special obligation to our province to provide a fast, efficient, modern transportation service. The gulf which separates our province from the mainland must be taken into consideration.

I do not think it is enough for the Minister of Transport to shrug his shoulders and pretend that all is well or just tell Newfoundlanders that they should learn to swim and stop complaining. The suggestion made by the hon. member for Skeena that members of the Canadian Transport Commission should leave their ivory towers in Ottawa and get around the country to see what is happening so that they can deal with some of the problems is a good one. I would welcome the opportunity to greet the