

Farm Debt Review Act

Canadian National Steamships operated with a fair number of vessels before it was made into CN Marine and broke away from Canadian National Railways. It is now being made into Marine Atlantic Inc. It is nice to do this on paper as we are legalizing what the Government started doing several years ago.

I would like to draw your attention to an episode which has been ongoing since 1962. At that time Canadian National Steamships sold one or more ships to the Government of Cuba. In 1962, that Government made its final payment of \$400,000. It was sent through the Chase Manhattan National Bank in New York. The parties to the agreement lived up to it completely. The Cubans made their final payment of \$400,000 a little ahead of time, but the American Government froze the assets of the Government of Cuba. Since 1962, that \$400,000 has increased to over \$1 million with accrued interest.

Canadian National and the Department of External Affairs has been having difficulty for 24 years with this \$400,000. The Cubans paid their bill on time and lived up to their obligation. Canadian National met its side of the deal, but the Americans are holding our money. If the Americans were going to make a gesture in the course of the free trade negotiations which would help out Marine Atlantic Inc., they could release those funds with the accrued interest and that would settle a sore point.

With regard to the attempts at cost recovery and reducing the deficit, when the Minister introduced the Bill he said that he expects that in its new character Marine Atlantic Inc. will operate more efficiently and at lower cost to the Government. That means higher fees for the users. In order to be logical you would have to charge fees like this in many other areas. People in the Atlantic provinces have to use the ferry services. They have no other choice.

If it is logical to increase user fees and implement cost recovery there, it would be logical to charge extra for snow removal. I can just visualize two extra guys on the snow removal crew. They would run from door to door on each side of the street charging a fee for snow removal. If someone did not pay, they would lift the blade of the snow-plough for the width of his lot and then continue to remove the snow from the rest of the street.

Cost recovery means higher costs for the people in Atlantic provinces. Those services should be toll free or, at the worst, only a nominal toll should be charged. The costs of implementing cost recovery often result in the exercise being self-defeating. In an essential service such as this, that should never enter the picture. If the subsidy has to be \$300 million instead of \$50 million, so be it. I have yet to hear a word of complaint from any taxpayer on the Prairies. I wonder if my hon. friend, the Member for Red Deer (Mr. Towers), has ever heard a complaint about the subsidy for ferry services in Atlantic Canada. I think that most Canadians are quite willing to share in the cost of transportation services across Canada. If I, as a resident of Saskatchewan, had the opportunity to take the ferry to Newfoundland only once in 10 years, I would be

happy that it was there. When you see a family having to part with \$20, \$30, or \$40 to make a necessary trip between those islands, and it is the only way they have of doing it, surely that is some kind of coercion or blackmail. It is certainly discrimination because of where they happen to live. If you were to shut down the Trans-Canada Highway between Regina and Moose Jaw or Red Deer and Calgary and make people pay \$20 to travel the next 20 miles, can you imagine the uproar? Therefore, this is just not logical, proper or fair.

● (1450)

We have no objection to the Government giving a Crown corporation a new name. We support it in principle. We think private enterprise has no damn business in that kind of enterprise. The people of Canada as a whole should share in the cost of operating it. I hope, Sir, that the Government will keep that in mind and stop fretting about reducing the subsidy it has to pay. The concern of the Government has to be that Marine Atlantic provide the best and safest possible service it can. It is a service to all of Canada and it shows the people in one region that they are part of Confederation and that the Government will work towards both increasing the subsidy and reducing the tolls and fees charged for the service. We hope that will happen when this legislation is in place.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): Are there questions or comments?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): Is the House ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): The question is as follows: Mr. Hnatyshyn (for the Minister of Transport), supported by Mr. Bissonnette, moved that Bill C-88, an Act to authorize the acquisition of Marine Atlantic Inc. and to provide for other matters in relation thereto, be read the third time and do pass.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to and Bill read the third time and passed.

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[*English*]

FARM DEBT REVIEW ACT

MEASURE TO ENACT

Hon. John Wise (Minister of Agriculture) moved that Bill C-117, an Act to facilitate financial arrangements between