

Oral Questions

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, as we have come to expect, there is some element of exaggeration in what the Hon. Member says. The Newfoundland Railway had 642 employees. If I have the figures correct, I believe 155 are eligible to go on early retirement; 140 I believe are continuing on with CN. That leaves 347 who had to be provided for. Collective negotiations are now under way. They will get all the benefits in their collective agreements. In addition, they will get generous other benefits that will look after them, that will pay them salaries in many cases until they are 65 and then a pension afterwards, or other jobs will be provided.

The negotiations are under way now. They resume on September 7. The union representative has said that he is expecting and hoping to conclude negotiations with satisfaction for all parties after this next round of talks. Let us be serious. The situation is well in hand.

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, the Minister did not include the remaining employees. He is an expert at side-tracking.

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CROWN CORPORATIONS

SALE OF TERRA NOVA TELECOMMUNICATIONS—EFFECT ON EMPLOYEES

Mr. George Baker (Gander—Twillingate): Mr. Baker, I want to ask the Minister about the remaining 400 employees of Terra Nova Telecommunications, which Crown corporation was sold last week. By the way, the consultant who represented the successful bidder is a prominent former Tory MP from Newfoundland, and the consultant hired to sell the Crown corporation on behalf of the Government is a prominent Tory fund raiser nationally. In fact he even raised money for the Minister for International Trade and even hired a *Playboy* centerfold, Miss Shannon Tweed, to spice things up.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Minister.

Mr. Crosbie: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member—

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the Hon. Member has not completed his question.

Mr. Baker: I will put the question, Mr. Speaker. Instead of Miss Tweed, perhaps Miss Piggy would have been more appropriate.

Can the Minister give a guarantee that there will be no layoffs in Newfoundland from this Terra Nova Telecommunications-Newfoundland Tel merger? Can he give that guarantee and, to prove it, will he at least table the documents?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): The hon. gentleman is an expert in blowing, whistling and puffing, as we have come to realize, and in shunting.

With respect to the 400 employees of Terra Nova Tel, they have been given a guarantee that their jobs will continue. Their pension rights are continuing. Gander will continue as a central part of the operation. Additional money will be spent for capital purposes and there will be a reduction of rates for the subscribers of Terra Nova Tel as a result of the take-over by Newfoundland Telephone. Guarantees have been given to CN in writing. I am prepared to repeat them here on the floor of the House.

As the hon. gentleman knows, the people of Gander and central Newfoundland are well satisfied with this transaction. His attempt to raise further alarms does the people he represents a distinct disservice.

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BROADCASTING

REQUEST THAT LEGISLATION BE WITHDRAWN

Mr. Ian Waddell (Vancouver—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Association of Broadcasters, the Canadian Conference on the Arts, ACTRA, the Canadian Film and Television Association, the Association of Canadian Film and Television Producers, CTV and Global Networks, the President of the CBC and the Chairman of the CRTC all have one thing in common. They oppose the Government's new broadcasting legislation.

Why is the Minister persisting with this legislation? She told the committee this morning that the Bill would go directly to the House and we would start debating it on Wednesday, September 14. She said the Bill would go through.

In view of the fact that the Prime Minister has said we will have an election announced on or about September 17, how does she intend to meet this impossible timetable? Why does she not withdraw the Bill?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, I must thank the Hon. Member for his co-operation in committee this morning. I think he was behaving like a perfectly proper committee member, helping to get this legislation through. I thank him for the suggestions and, in fact, the amendments that he put forward.

A year ago this time, which I remember so well, Members of the New Democratic Party and the Opposition in general were asking why the Minister did not move forward more quickly with this legislation. They were asking why we did not have new broadcasting legislation because we had been working at it for two years. They were asking why it was not introduced and passed.