

Marine Atlantic Inc.

around Atlantic Canada. It is not just one way for those who use it, it is the only way. This Bill not only severs the company from CN but it is a Bill that severs and tears at the fabric of Canada.

I recall the words of a gentleman named Gordon Bradley. He occupied the same position you occupy, Mr. Speaker, in 1948 in the Province of Newfoundland when we were debating whether we would send a delegation in 1947-48 to the United States to seek union with the U.S. or a delegation to Canada to seek union with Canada. Mr. Bradley was the Chairman of the Commission that had been established to determine what Newfoundland's future ought to be and where it lay. For many Newfoundlanders there was no question. Newfoundland's future was with Canada, it was completing the 10 provinces from sea to sea. But there were others for their own reasons and their own convictions who felt that our future should be with the United States.

I have never doubted, neither from Canada's point of view nor from Newfoundland's point of view a scant few decades ago—1949 was not all that long ago, 37 years, when Newfoundland made its choice—that we made the right choice. I do not doubt it now in the face of Bill C-88 and other insults that have been hurled at my province and, indeed, PEI as well, that we made the right decision.

During one particularly acrimonious evening of debate as Members fought back and forth across the way, Gordon Bradley suddenly stood up and bellowed "Order". He said to the Members assembled: "Gentleman, I remind you that the eyes of the people of Newfoundland are upon you now. They are watching you. They are weighing your every word and sometimes I fear you have tried their patience much too far".

Those words spoken in 1948 bear repeating today. The eyes of the people of Newfoundland are upon this place. They are watching us. They are weighing our words. More important, they are measuring our actions. Legislation, which may seem to the Government merely an act of expediency, merely a piece of legislation to try to cut costs, to reduce levels of government subsidies, legislation that would be perceived by a Cabinet purely in an economic number-counting way, in Newfoundland is seen as an insensitive piece of work. It is work that has been badly done. It ignores the geographic, economic and the social reality of my province. I say that in the hope that Members opposite will understand those words and will receive them and will think about them in the spirit in which they have been said.

• (1150)

One must understand the message that Newfoundlanders believe is coming from Ottawa when their ferry service is reduced and the cost increased, when a railway is closed and when a fisherman is told that the small craft harbours program has been wiped out. It costs potato farmers more to grow their crops than they get when they sell them and they have suddenly been slapped with a new series of inspection fees. The message that these people are receiving is that they are

expedient, are on the outer fringe, are not central to the country, and that the political power and influence in the country emanates from the centre and dies before it gets to the East Coast.

If that message continues to go out undiminished, it will create in my province, not for romantic or emotional reasons, but for economic and social reasons, a generation of people who will do as I do not, that is, question seriously the decision which was made in 1949.

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, I would like to add a few comments to the debate on Bill C-88, an Act to authorize the acquisition of Marine Atlantic Inc. and to provide for other matters in relation thereto. I will start with the process.

Like the previous administration, this administration likes to do things by Cabinet decree and then come to Parliament to tidy up the paperwork. When the Government of the day decided, for whatever reason, that it was appropriate to make what we now know as CN Marine into the new Crown corporation, Marine Atlantic Inc., it should have come to Parliament first. It should have presented us with the legislation which will come into effect in a year from now and given us the opportunity to have a broad discussion on the appropriateness of separating out one of CN's components. We should have had an opportunity to determine whether it made sense, with regard to the economics and the social value of transportation, to break up the various modes of CNR.

More recently there has been a decision to dispose of the CN trucking operation. We are seeing a fragmentation. We are in a very difficult position because the act has been done. All we are doing through the process of the legislation is to confirm what is already in place. It would be ludicrous for us in the House to cancel the decision. You cannot turn time back, even though some Hon. Members on the other side of the House would like to do that. We must go forward to give legal approval to the actions that CN and the Government of Canada have taken. This is so typical. We have seen other instances where the Government has presented a Bill which gives it certain powers and then negotiated instead of doing the negotiating first. It is clear that the Government's view of operating things has no regard for the people of Canada.

This is a very important Crown corporation. We who come from mid-Canada do not appreciate the value of CN Marine or Marine Atlantic Inc. to the people of Atlantic Canada. We do not appreciate it because we do not have anything similar which we must use to communicate with the rest of Canada. We hop in our cars and drive down the TransCanada Highway. If we want a little variety on the way to Toronto we will go through Tobermory and take a ferry across part of the Great Lakes. However, that is only an alternative for us.

On the two island provinces in Atlantic Canada they do not have a choice. If they want to travel by surface transport they have to use one of the vessels of Marine Atlantic Inc. They are captive to the rules of that Crown corporation. They are