

Newfoundland Ferry Service

ing the railway system spilling over to the ferry system merely because both are operated by the Canadian National Railways. As a first step the East Coast Marine and Ferry Service was recently set up as a separate entity within the Canadian National organization to handle ferry matters. This new body has now begun negotiations with the various unions representing employees in the ferry system, with a view to finding some mutually acceptable means of limiting strikes against the ferry services.

In the fall of 1972 a team of Canadian National and Department of Transport officials began examining the original structure of the east coast ferry service to Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island, and considering alternatives. Among those considered were: creating a separate entity for the ferry service that would report to the Canadian National Vice President responsible for the Atlantic region; creating a separate Canadian National subsidiary with its own board of directors; creating a Crown corporation, or incorporating the ferry service in the public service.

On October 12, 1973, the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Jamieson), the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand) and Mr. McMillan of the Canadian National announced the creation of a new east coast ferry management structure, based at Moncton, New Brunswick, with operating units in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island, and responsible for all ferry and coastal services operated by Canadian National for the Department of Transport.

A significant feature of this reorganization was the creation of a directing committee for the new administration, composed of senior transport officials and Canadian National officials. The major objectives of the new administration were co-ordination, improvement and expansion of the present ferry and coastal services to meet the expected increases in traffic demands.

It should be noted that under all of the alternatives employees would either have, by law, the right to strike or be able to choose the right to strike as a means of dispute settlement. Is this what we want? Does the motion mean that we should take this away from them?

Even if the various ferry services could be declared essential, I cannot see much point in trying to bring in legislation which would prohibit strikes. There is absolutely no way of ensuring that employees under certain conditions might not find it necessary or desirable to initiate a work stoppage. We should remember that in the last strike situation affecting the ferries the government succeeded in obtaining the agreement of the union leaders that ferry services would be maintained, but their own men rejected the call of the leaders and the guarantee evaporated.

It has been suggested again and again that rather than have a shutdown of ferry service the armed forces should be called in to keep the services running. This has been suggested many times. This seems to me to be a counsel of despair, but fortunately it could never be considered as a viable alternative. For one thing, by law only qualified seamen can operate a passenger vessel, and the appropriate skills and qualifications are not easily found in the armed forces. Furthermore, the law also requires that ships be manned by officers holding certain certificates,

[Mr. Guay (St. Boniface).]

and these are not available in the military. Most of all, however, the government would not be easily disposed to using the military as strike breakers, when the right to strike was itself given by parliament.

I would like to repeat that the Minister of Transport has said on many occasions—including some in this chamber—that if the members want to abolish the right to strike they will have to do so on their own, since the government has no intention of taking such action. I said before, and I should like to repeat, that if the hon. members from Newfoundland and their leader have that policy in their party, they ought to say so and not come in the back door.

I cannot resist at this point drawing the hon. member's attention to the evidence of how seriously the government is trying to live up to its commitments under the terms of union. Detailed planning is already under way for the design and construction of new ferries in Canadian shipyards, and in the interim the government has spent considerable amounts of money on chartering vessels to make sure that all traffic offering can be handled in accordance with the terms of union.

The traffic growth to Newfoundland jumped from an average of 5 per cent a year until 1971 to 14 per cent in 1972, and it has required considerable effort and money to keep up with this sort of growth. I am most pleased to say there is that kind of growth in the area. I am following it much closer than the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Carter) may think, Mr. Speaker. I think I am quite aware of what is taking place in his province.

Today on the Newfoundland run we have eight vessels regularly employed. They are the *William Carson*, *Leif Eriksson*, *Ambrose Shea*, *Frederick Carter*, *John Hamilton Gray*, *Stena Carrier*, *Stena Seatrade* and the *Princess of Tasmania*. In addition, to clear up the backlog resulting from the 1973 strike, the *Stena Trailer* and the *Jarl Transporter* were taken on short term charter.

The replacement of the *Lucy Maud Montgomery* on this service by the larger chartered vessel the *Princess of Tasmania*, combined with additional weekend sailings, has helped to provide an increased capacity to handle the growth in highway traffic. In order to eliminate the railcar backlog experienced in the last two years, a railcar carrier the *Stena Seatrade* has been chartered for two years as of last fall, and tenders have been called for a Canadian built vessel of this type with expected delivery late in 1973.

Mr. Marshall: Too late! You should have done it ten years ago.

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): The hon. member says it should have been done ten years ago. Maybe so! The fact remains that it is being done. It takes time, but it is coming and you will get exactly what you are asking for. At least you know it is coming, but the opposition never mentions that these things are taking place and neither do they mention the cost of them. I think it should be repeated many times that this government has taken the initiative to have the ferries built which will benefit Newfoundland very greatly. In the Diefenbaker years they never even thought of Newfoundland, and that is obvious if we want to study the record as suggested by the hon. member for St. John's West.