

Government Orders

ago, which we are supposed to continue just because Mr. Pickersgill or somebody put their name to it.

Times and circumstances change. The subsidization is not accomplishing the desired effect. It is not realistic, as I said at the outset. I can do no better than to repeat it. Bill C-26 is about reality. If the hon. member does not want to face reality then I can understand why he will not support Bill C-26.

Mr. George S. Rideout (Moncton): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to listen to the comments from the members opposite about the benefits of Bill C-26 for Atlantic Canada.

When we analyse what this government has done over the last few months, we have to wonder what will happen to us in Atlantic Canada.

Bill C-26 is a clear example of how this government treats Atlantic Canada. I listened to the hon. member for Halifax West tell us that we should give up on this particular subsidy and this particular grain handling bill. In the meantime we can wait to see what happens and maybe argue for something else.

Atlantic Canadians are fed up with giving up. We have given up our VIA Rail system. We have given up almost every type of support mechanism that has been available to Atlantic Canadians over the years. The hon. member for Halifax West tells us to continue to give up. Quite frankly, Atlantic Canadians are fed up with giving up.

It is interesting to listen to government members and their code words. They talk about the bottom line, market forces and subsidies. In the final analysis, we see they are caught in the dilemma of the free trade agreement. They have to abandon the unemployment insurance program that involved government participation because of the free trade agreement.

Now, Bill C-26 forces the government to give up support to the grain handlers in Atlantic Canada, to the railway industry and to all the other support industries because in part the free trade agreement was poorly negotiated and left Atlantic Canadians in the lurch.

As the government proceeds step by step with its agenda, we realize that it is tearing apart the total infrastructure that has functioned well in Atlantic Canada. Consider, for example, the lack of support for the Trans-Canada Highway in New Brunswick, and the

dismantling of all of VIA Rail except for the mainline. With the removal of this at and east subsidy, we will see more CN and CP lines abandoned.

The government states that it is doing this for Atlantic Canada, and is behind us 100 per cent. It is all nonsense, it is not behind anyone.

The purpose of the program was to allow the Atlantic Canadian ports an opportunity to survive and compete against the Americans and also the Upper Canadians in Montreal. The government wants to take that advantage away. It is telling Atlantic Canadians to sink or swim on their own. What it will do is cut off all the life supports now, and then ask the government to come back and try to negotiate after they lost everything.

That is totally unacceptable to us in Atlantic Canada. The problem is that when you only deal with bottom lines and with numbers, statistics and data like that, you forget that there are people involved. There are people who have jobs. There are people who have families and children going to university. Where are they left when this government is through taking away every type of support mechanism that is available?

Members opposite often tell us solutions. The Atlantic Provinces Transportation Commission offered solutions. It put a proposal on the table a year ago, and the government simply ignored it and brought in Bill C-26. It did not listen to the Atlantic Provinces Transportation Commission. It did not listen to anybody. It just went ahead and did what it felt was right, which turns out, as usual, to be wrong.

It is no wonder, when you look at the polls that were released today that in Atlantic Canada the government is down to about 20 per cent in popularity, with the Liberal party at 67 per cent. It is because it has destroyed the confidence of Atlantic Canadians in their government and what it is doing. While the government talks about regional disparity and trying to hold this country together, at the same time it dismantles everything which Atlantic Canadians hold dear in all of their structures.

The government has botched its handling of the fishing industry. It has botched the railway industry. Now it has botched its handling of this issue.

This is a critical aspect of development in Atlantic Canada. The program has been in existence since the