

before he tried to get his hands on old age pensions? Canadians slapped his wrists, and he stood back.

When the Tories were re-elected in 1988 they could not wait and brought in the clawback which ends universality, which will cut back and shrink old age pensions and family allowances.

I just want to remind the hon. member that yes, every government makes a mistake but the Liberal government never went out and deliberately destroyed programs and institutions that served this country well.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne):** Resuming debate. The hon. member for Egmont.

**Mr. Joe McGuire (Egmont):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on Bill C-26, a bill which amends the Railway Act by eliminating the at and east grain and flour subsidy programs. The intention to eliminate this program was indicated in the budget of April 27, 1989. The program was scheduled to end July 15, 1989.

I find it somewhat ironic that it is now February 20, and we are in debate on second reading of a bill which in reality has become law already. Second reading has not been completed. There has been no committee study. There has been no third reading. There has been no Senate approval. There has been no royal assent. Yet, Madam Speaker, the program has been eliminated, retroactive to July 16, 1989.

Unless I misunderstand the process, this current exercise is a charade. Parliament has been subverted by this government once again. However, since the question of privilege raised by my colleague in the NDP, the member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre, is not yet ruled upon, I want to take this opportunity to add my comments to those of my colleagues who oppose this bill.

Since the budget of April 27 last, this government has launched an insidious attack on Atlantic Canada. Whatever the motivation or rationale, be it the infamous level playing field, or the free trade agreement, or some other matter, there has been a steady stream of measures which has laid waste the Atlantic Region of our country.

The litany includes the closure or reduction of six military bases. This has affected almost half the bases in the entire country. The worst incident, of course, is the closure of Summerside which killed 1,300 direct jobs,

1,300 indirect jobs, and is affecting one-third of the economic activity of the entire region of the province of P.E.I.

There are the changes to the unemployment insurance system. The increased number of weeks required to qualify will force many people on to the welfare rolls and the burden on the provinces will be increased.

The decision by the federal government to opt out of UI funding also raises a question of what will happen to the fund if a recession should occur and there is a need to increase available moneys as there was in the early 1980s. At that time the federal government kicked in the required money. What is the answer to this problem if it occurs in the 1990s, which is very likely to happen?

In addition, the unemployment benefits for self-employed fishermen are not protected by the UIC act changes. The government has the power to alter the benefit package or even eliminate the whole fishermen's program without consulting Parliament. The fishermen of Atlantic Canada, particularly those of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, must find the situation very disconcerting.

Our fishery is in a state of crisis. When this major industry suffers it impacts seriously on the economy of the entire Atlantic region, but for towns like Canso, Nova Scotia, it is catastrophic.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate my colleague from Cape Breton—Highlands—Canso for the excellent work he has been doing with the people in Canso and with the organization of the tremendous demonstration of Saturday past. The Friends of CFB Summerside were proud and happy to be able to participate and contribute to that success. I also offer him a word of encouragement from the people of Egmont and Summerside. If our experience can be of any assistance, we offer it to him with our full support.

Our railway services have also been abandoned. Prince Edward Island and some areas of the mainland have suffered a total loss of rail service, both passenger and freight. Rail service in other regions has been drastically reduced. This will have a crippling effect on our transportation system and will make it increasingly difficult to attract industries to Atlantic Canada.