

The hon. member for Annapolis Valley—Hants takes the right view. If more people on that side listened to him more often they would be in a lot fewer problems than they are there these days. The amendments would simply delay the removal of this program until 1995. That would assist the organizations concerned that are dependent upon rail rates to plan rational alternative routes and methods to export grain and flour in order to maintain both an equitable return and to maintain their competitiveness in the international market. We all know that the bill as it stands now would adversely affect both the returns of the producers and adversely affect their international competitiveness.

Where is the compassion of the government? For example, government members keep telling us that when the goods and services tax is implemented the government is going to help everybody. I happen to doubt that, but that is another debate for another time. I use it by way of example to show that if this government is so seized with helping people, it has here a golden opportunity to help some people maintain their position as producers and maintain their position of competitiveness internationally. It can do it with one stroke of the pen, by simply withdrawing this crazy bill altogether. But if it does not want to do that, it could have its cake and eat it too by legislating in accordance with the bill but putting it on hold until 1995.

These amendments put forward by my friend, the hon. member for Lambton—Middlesex would have the effect of allowing the government some time to develop the alternative programs it has announced for the ports of Saint John and Halifax, rather than abandoning these ports and the livelihood of the individuals affected by the removal of these rail rates while it determines what it ultimately plans to do.

• (1240)

These amendments would also give the government an opportunity to be consistent with the testimony of witnesses who appeared before the legislative committee during committee stage. Witnesses stated that there may be inefficiencies in this legislation but urged, in essence, that rather than eliminating the program and then assisting in an *ad hoc* manner certain parts of the puzzle, it would have made more sense to have the alternative

Government Orders

programs for all groups affected in place before eliminating the existing programs.

Since that makes very good sense one must ask why the government persists in pushing this legislation through before the time is ripe?

It is worth reviewing again the process that we go through in this House to ensure that our legislation is good legislation which serves the common good. We have had first reading and second reading of this bill, after which, it went to a legislative committee. We are now, in effect, debating the report of that committee. At this stage we are entertaining amendments which have come forward as a result of the testimony of witnesses before the committee. In short, at this stage we ought to be deciding whether the legislation is no good at all, whether it is perfect as is, or whether we must find ways to improve it.

My colleague, the hon. member for Lambton—Middlesex has found two or three ways in which this legislation, as bad as it is, could be salvaged and be improved upon, or at least a way in which we could buy some time for the people who are going to be adversely affected if this bill passes unamended.

Therefore, we must ask why the government persists in doing something like this, having been told the havoc it will create and the damage it will cost in economic terms for a lot of people across this country. That is the question.

The answer lies in this almost glazed over messianic zeal that we get from those members on so many initiatives these days, whether it is on the goods and services tax, closing of rural post offices, or the attacking of the rural way of life generally. That is an issue that I could talk long and hard about. It shows that we have a government that has stopped listening to the Canadian people and one of the sad results of that is that we are getting some very bad legislation in this Parliament.

Any draft bill is subject to the whim of the drafter. That is why we have this process in this House, so that by scrutiny in committee and in this chamber we can find the flaws in the legislation and cure those flaws. We can nip them in the bud, before they are perpetrated in legislation and before they affect the lives of people across this country. That process breaks down completely if there are people who are not listening any more. Someone once said that none is so deaf as he who will not hear. That is what we have on our hands right now, a government that will not hear. The government has stopped listening to the Canadian people whether on the