

Softwood Lumber Products

mothers. That is something we are in favour of. It might even come under the jurisdiction of the Hon. Minister if his colleague, the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp) does not want to handle it. We are talking about capital and operating subsidies to non-profit daycare centres, which are the most efficient.

We have also spoken out in support of the garment and footwear industries of Canada. There are certain actions this and the previous Government should have taken which would have greatly strengthened those industries without cost to the taxpayers. However, this Government, like its predecessor, is wishy-washy on that issue whereas we have taken a firm stand.

We have also pointed out that many prairie farmers are facing bankruptcy, those who have not already gone through bankruptcy need much more serious financial aid than they have received in the past, particularly because of the unfair competition from the United States which subsidizes its grain exports to about twice the dollar rate per bushel as Canada.

We have also spoken out strongly against the increase in the tolls on the Seaway by the Government. In other words, we spoke out in favour of lower tolls on the Canadian Seaway for the export of our grain, something which not only the farmers but the country badly needs. The Government is trying to squeeze revenue out of our export trade at a point at which it can no longer be squeezed. All it can do is put more farmers out of business with these high tolls.

● (1230)

We have also spoken many times in favour of Canada's railways, which the Government seems willing to dismantle. When I was first elected to the House a little over five years ago the then Official Opposition was against the dismantling of the railway system. Now that that Party has crossed the floor it is carrying on what its Liberal predecessors were doing. It is dismantling the system by mishandling the work of VIA Rail. We have been told that there will be legislation, but it is on the slow back burner. We are not being given any serious opportunities to discuss the railways in Parliament.

CN is planning to lay off 14,000 employees over the next 10 years. The Government says it can do nothing about that. Yet it can give \$1 billion to a bank which went broke because it attracted investors with high rates of interest based on faulty loans which turned bad. In other words, we rewarded greed which was not producing anything. However, to reward railway workers for producing transportation is as unpopular with the Government as rewarding farmers for producing wheat.

We are asking for a rebuilding of the tracks. We are asking for the production of new rolling stock. We are asking for the renovation of Canada's railway system. That is something positive. I have not heard the Minister of Public Works or any of his colleagues give any support to such ideas.

We are asking for 50,000 units per year of social housing. Even at that rate it would take us 10 years to catch up on the

backlog of 500,000 under-housed people, a figure supported by the former Minister responsible for housing. It is a modest figure but it would take us 10 years at 50,000 units per year to accomplish that end. Instead, the Government has cut back on social housing. We have demanded consistently that the Government intervene in favour of housing that ordinary Canadians, including the poor, can afford.

[Translation]

Mr. Blais: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): The Hon. Member for Bellechasse (Mr. Blais) on a point of order.

Mr. Blais: Madam Speaker, I am not too sure whether we are still debating the same Bill, but I think the Hon. Member is talking about housing. I did not say anything for a while although I believe that Members have been debating half a dozen issues which have absolutely nothing to do with the matter now under consideration.

For weeks on end the New Democratic Party had been virulently clamoring that the Government ought to deal with the softwood lumber issue, yet this morning we have heard speeches on housing, Quebec day care centres and what else except the matter under study. In my opinion, Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member should get back to the subject on which they were so insistent for a number of weeks.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): I am sure the Hon. Member for Spadina (Mr. Heap) in the closing minutes of his remarks will find a link between those subjects and the Bill which is now before us. Perhaps he will focus on the Bill in the few minutes which he has left.

Mr. Heap: Madam Speaker, I was attempting to clear up the misunderstanding created by the Hon. Member's colleague, the Minister of Public Works. Apparently, the Hon. Member and perhaps the Minister do not want to hear the answer to the question the Minister posed two days ago. I wish to make the link more clearly since they cannot figure it out for themselves.

The Bill before us will damage our chief export industry. It will damage it by cutting back on markets. Whether or not it will produce net revenue to the Government, and what the Government in its wisdom will do with that revenue has not been outlined. So far it has demonstrated its wisdom in cabinet scandals. Perhaps it will buy more armaments or become involved in more land scandals, we do not know.

There has been no indication that the supposed benefits of the Bill, the revenues which will accrue to the Government, will be used in any positive way. The Government has been asked by the cities of Canada, and by all the provinces, to take a one-third share of the cost of rebuilding roads and sewers which are essential infrastructures. The NDP supports that proposition.