

Mr. Whittaker: Madam Speaker, first, I would like to compliment the member on his expertise in this area. He obviously has done his work. I would like to pick up on something that he said. It is about this Conservative party that is so hard and harsh on the people in the regions. Those from the Golden Triangle feel that everything they have they are going to keep yet those in the regions are being hit harder and harder.

I spoke to a woman from Newfoundland this morning. She talked about the GST and some of the attitudes of this government toward small business and others in Atlantic Canada. I am from the west, as is the member who was making comments, and he should know also that those of us in the regions and not in the Golden Triangle of central Canada realize that this government is on a strange journey that is going to hurt those of us in the east and west.

• (1530)

This woman in Newfoundland pointed out that one of the things missing from this government to those of us outside central Canada is communication. This government has let communication break down a substantial amount. It keeps throwing money and saying it is communicating, but in fact it is trying to send its agenda out and sell it.

What we have run into in the finance committee and every committee that sits is how to sell our programs. The government spends millions and millions of dollars in this way instead of actually listening to the people.

The member mentioned the goods and services tax, cuts in regional programs, cuts in VIA Rail, high interest rates, health and post-secondary education cuts. Can he make a comment to this House as to how he sees the lack of communication between government and the regions?

Mr. Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his comments. Perhaps "expertise" is a little strong, but I did live in Halifax for nine years prior to moving to Saskatoon. Therefore I have some understanding of the issues there. Unlike the Prime Minister, I have been to Newfoundland and to Atlantic Canada in recent months to assess the situation there.

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Clearly the situation is an extremely grave one. The government is not paying attention to Atlantic fishermen and their families. It is not paying attention to those in that region. This point was made to me on many occasions during my recent visits through the outports of Newfoundland.

It is time the government paid attention to these concerns. It is time the government listened and acted in a way which is necessary in this case, that is, it recognizes the magnitude of the problems that Atlantic Canada is facing.

Mr. Rex Crawford (Kent): Madam Speaker, I rise today to debate Bill C-26 and to argue against the principle of this legislation and against the principles the government has embodied not only within this legislation, but the very manner in which this legislation was brought forward.

The change to eliminate the at and east grain and flour subsidy, a program that has assisted in the orderly marketing of grain and assisted in providing the impetus to create a milling industry for exports since the 1950s was cancelled in the budget, as was the Advance Payments for Crops and the Prairie Grain Advance Payments programs. Its role and purpose in the budget papers has been intentionally obscured.

The actual purpose, according to the Hon. J. W. Pickersgill, the Liberal Minister of Transport who introduced the program in 1966, was to ensure that eastern Canadian ports could compete with the U.S. ports, and to enable the ports of Halifax and Saint John to compete with Montreal and other St. Lawrence River ports.

Further, as the minister stated then: "According to the Board of Transport Commissioners these rates are already unremunerative—We decided to keep these rates at their present level to pay compensation for doing so. This is because we feel there is an equal obligation in this field to the obligation with regard to the Crow's Nest. The purpose of this is to ensure that we will have rates which will provide some inducement and incentive to shippers to use the facilities of the Atlantic ports." This was from *Hansard* committee report, transport and communications, 1966, page 1669.

However, since the budget papers fail to mention the second and third reasons, should we assume that this is because they will be eliminated in the next budget and are no longer relevant, or is the minister attempting to