

Government Orders

caucus who has really led the fight on this particular legislation.

I would like to take a look at some of the work that has been done in this regard. Madam Speaker, I know that you would be most interested in doing that. In particular I would like to refer to the headlines, which is I guess how Canadians find out about what we are doing in this place. One headline in referring to the National Transportation Agency states "NDP Critic Asks the Agency" to review this matter. He caught them off guard. That is the kind of good work we are doing in this area.

Another headline states "Subsidy Being Cut and Elevator Closing". Here is a good one. Like all members in this House we like to have stories like this one written about us from time to time: "The MP from Moose Jaw—Lake Centre is making waves in New Brunswick".

The reason he is making waves in New Brunswick is that once again this government is bringing in the kind of bottom line mentality legislation that is having an impact on the Atlantic Canadian region, as well as on other areas.

We can put this matter back to back with the debate we had just last night on legislation that is going to help the wealthy. It is interesting as well to see the position that the Liberal Party takes on this matter. As you know, Madam Speaker, it would appear that it has given up on the fight on the GST. Liberal Party members have no position. They are not even sure what that is.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Gardiner: It will be interesting to see just what position they take on this particular legislation.

We have them excited again, as we did yesterday. We woke them up. The Liberal Party as we know has been following the practices that the Conservatives are now implementing.

Let us take a look at what Bill C-26 is all about. First, I would like to give a little background. This bill is commonly referred to as the at and east freight assistance program which pays a subsidy to the railways on export grain and flour moving via specified routes through eastern Canadian ports. The rates paid by the

shipper have been frozen since 1960 with respect to export grain and since 1966 with respect to flour.

The notes are very interesting. If members need them after to do some work on this subject I would be pleased to provide them with a copy. Let us look at the history of this legislation, Bill C-26.

When the railways wished to increase their rates in the 1960s, it was then argued—I bet it was even argued by the Conservatives at that time—that increased rates would price Saint John and Halifax out of the market. It was thus felt important to maintain rates at a fixed level so that eastern rates would remain competitive.

The beneficiaries of this particular legislation were Halifax and Saint John. Here are some interesting statistics concerning this matter. Of all grain moved from Saint John, 95 per cent moves under Bill C-26, the at and east program, while 67 per cent of grain moved through Halifax moves through the at and east program as well.

With respect to flour, virtually all flour moved through the two ports moves at the at and east rates. Flour amounts to approximately one-third of all general cargo handled at Halifax and 7 per cent of general cargo at Saint John.

What is the cost? It is a subsidy, and we all know what the Conservatives think about subsidies. They will cut them wherever they are needed and then, as the member from Kootenay West said so clearly last night in the debate on Bill C-52, they will argue: "We have to make things fairer. We have to do away with that evil universality. We must take from those people who do not need it, and let us make sure that the people who are poor and are in need get some kind of assistance".

What do they do? They introduce Bill C-52 which helps the wealthy. Yet, what are they doing in this case? They are cutting a subsidy which costs about \$32 million a year as calculated by our researchers who have spent a considerable amount of time looking into this matter. In Bill C-52, the bill we debated last night, what are we giving to the wealthy? Hundreds of millions of dollars.

Let us see who depends on this subsidy for help in this particular market area and in terms of these transportation costs.