

the government should use the economic and fiscal system to work with the economy, instead of against it.

● (1220)

Mr. Speaker, I think I have made my point, which is that no one in any party in the House is opposed to restraints on superfluous spending, but when the government slips into this bill a proposal which undermines the basic foundation of our federal system, the pledge made 109 years ago and renewed by government after government of all political stripes since that time, a pledge with regard to transportation and communication which is now attacked by this government, and when we see the attack in 1974 on the ownership of resources which are in the hands of the provinces, an impression is created across the country that the government is not really concerned with helping the people and the provinces but is only concerned with one thing, that is, control over and restriction of the minds and pocketbooks of the people.

Any parliament will support reasonable proposals to reduce the spending of money, but not when the government attacks one of the basic agreements that we have made with the people east of Montreal in the "at and east" rates. Every government has respected this agreement since then, but now we see the government sneaking in a clause to section 272 of the Railway Act, and this we cannot support. I hope you Liberal backbenchers opposite rally in caucus and tell your Prime Minister to take that nonsense out of the bill.

We hear all these little arguments about user-pay. If it could be done by a person who paid all the time, it would be different. If the government wants our support in reducing expenditures, let it not attack our federal system. We believe in Canada, we believe in our nation, and we believe that people in all parts of our country should have an equal right to opportunities. When you destroy that for the Atlantic provinces, you destroy it for the west also. Westerners know that if you take out that section 272, our Crownsnest pass rates will go next and subsidization of the north will go after that. If you look at the price of things in towns such as Thunder Bay and Kenora, you will know what I am talking about. These people take a heck of a beating because we have a government which thinks of public relations and of getting control into the hands of a few civil servants here in Ottawa, rather than of the interest of the people. That is not why we are here. For a rich country like Canada, which is coming out of a recession, to be sent back into it by the stupidity of the advisers of this government is plain stupid and should not be tolerated.

If I were a backbencher over there, I would be yelling my head off, not just on issues of language, which are important, but also on economic issues. Tell your Prime Minister, who is not a stupid man, to take control and tell his Minister of Finance (Mr. Macdonald) to read and find out the facts, and to show some leadership, instead of surrendering to this tendency whereby they think they have everything in their hands because they know best. It is not only the dairy farmers and the chicken farmers who get it. They are taking every taxpayer in the country and wringing him and her like a wet cloth. Let

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us stand up as parliamentarians and speak up for the concept that every person in Canada deserves an equal opportunity. If you take out section 272 of the Railway Act, you will know what trouble is.

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I hope that today, for the first time in a long time, members of the old-line parties are in a mood to listen.

Mr. Paproski: Are you taking credit for the victory?

Mr. Benjamin: I hope that a lesson has been learned, but I note there are only 13 members on the government side, which would indicate they are still losers. I am glad to see what the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Goodale) is here. However, I am sorry the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) is not here.

An hon. Member: "Jet" Lang!

Mr. Benjamin: The Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Macdonald) is here. He has his version of "at and east" rates. I was interested to listen to the remarks of the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton). I agree with some of the things he had to say, but I disagree with the way he wants to do it, because it is no different from the way the Liberals want to do it. He still believes in free enterprise which is neither free nor enterprising. He still believes you should have competition in transportation across Canada, as do the Liberals. He even believes that our modes of transportation should show a profit, as do the Liberals, when in fact no mode of transportation has ever shown a profit without public subsidization. I wish the hon. member would add one additional step—which would have brought him to the 1980s instead of the 1880s—and would agree that all modes of transportation are an essential public service and a public utility, and that goods, services and people should be treated fairly in Canada no matter where they are located.

This bill is a typical old-line party, free enterprise attack on those who do not cause inflation. It is a typical failure to show restraint in areas where they could show restraint without hurting the country and hurting the low and middle income families, without hurting primary industry and without hurting regions of Canada that are located somewhere other than south of North Bay between Windsor and Quebec City. In this bill, the government is even attempting to hurt people in that area for the sake of saving a paltry \$11 million.

The government did not allow the indexing of family allowances last year on the premise, I suppose, that these young families with two, three or more children somehow or other cause inflation. The removal of the indexing of family allowances in 1976 cost Canadian families about \$230 million. Why the government should stop this transfer of income to families is unknown and does not make economic sense. In fact, the government's own economic review in April of this year states:

There is no doubt that the strength and timeliness of the income support given to Canadians between November, 1974, and June, 1975, were among the most important factors in the milder recession experienced in Canada compared to the United States.