

Restraint of Government Expenditures

tax dollars provided by people working in industries that are complementary to and help supply the milling industry. I suggest the \$17 million is more than made up for.

I want to give some facts and figures, Mr. Speaker. So far as my reasoned amendment is concerned, the clause of the bill that worries me most is clause 15, which will eliminate forever the statutory protection that exists today which provides assistance to exporters of flour. From now on this assistance will be at the whim or whimsy of the minister, no matter how sincere he be or of what political stripe. There will not be the same protection as in a statute; what protection is offered should not be considered in the same light.

This is why we in the opposition, and particularly those from Atlantic Canada, have from the outset been violently opposed to the bill. We are not opposed to all parts of the bill; there are some very good aspects of it. But in terms of clause 15 there are about 25 of my colleagues who are prepared to fight until the cows come home. We think this provision will do an economic injustice to an area that has already suffered enough economic injustices. Not all can be blamed on the government, but when it comes to restraint Atlantic Canada is hit harder than any other area, and it is an area that can sustain it the least.

I have moved this reasoned amendment because protection will be given not by statute but by order in council. I appreciate that Your Honour will want to rule on my amendment at some time as to whether it is in order. I was in this House for a few years before 1968, but I know the batting record since 1968 so far as reasoned amendments are concerned is not too good. Only about three or four have been ruled in order, some 20 odd have been tossed out. I have looked at the rulings and I know the difficulty which speakers have advanced. The decision seems to stand or fall on whether the amendment meets the first criterion set out in May and quoted in citation 382 of *Beauchesne*. I know Your Honour is fully aware of it, but it reads as follows:

It is also competent to a member who desires to place on record any special reasons for not agreeing to the second reading of a Bill, to move as an amendment to the question, a resolution declaratory of some principle adverse to, or differing from, the principles, policy, or provisions of the bill . . .

The principle of this restraint bill is that expenditures should be reduced by specific reductions in, or deletions of, long-standing program commitments. They are so long standing, Mr. Speaker, that they are inscribed in and protected by statute. These long-standing commitments will be reduced to an extent to be determined largely by executive discretion; in other words, by order in council, or ministerial discretion. I suggest that the alternative is a general commitment to administrative efficiency, encouraged by constant and critical parliamentary supervision. Parliament should review change so that the public is protected, rather than have change by order in council or executive discretion.

We are faced with two opposing principles, in effect. You have executive discretion created by this bill because the bill removes parliamentary protection and replaces it with execu-

[Mr. Nowlan.]

tive order in council. I believe that the amendment delineates clear issues of fundamental principle and policy as is required by *Beauchesne*, and therefore should be accepted.

So far as the multiplier effect of the bill is concerned, when you consider the complementary industries that serve the milling export trade there is some \$68 million involved. I am not going to talk about the export of grain because the proposal of the Minister of Transport is not giving any further assistance to the export of grain, only flour. But so far as the export of flour is concerned, the result of this bill will be further unemployment. There is the value added component connected with the milling industry, and as I have said there are complementary industries. If the price of flour goes up \$15 to \$20 a metric ton, as several experts have predicted, a complementary loss in your export of grain will thereby be incurred. So there will be a double whammy effect, all for the sake of \$17 million.

My concern is not only about the repeal of the *Railway Act*. When the Minister of Agriculture, the hon. member for *Essex-Windsor* (Mr. Whelan, that beef eater, ferocious Gene, appeared before the Committee on Agriculture and was asked about the elimination of Section 272 of the *Railway Act*, he said "nuts". He thought it was such a crazy proposal he said "nuts" to it. That was more than six months ago. Unfortunately the minister has not participated in this debate so we have no indication whether he still wants to eat nuts or beef, or what he wants. However, I believe he realizes how concerned the agricultural industry is about the removal of this subsidy and the adverse effect that it will have on the export of grain and flour. I hope the minister will participate in this debate.

● (1740)

Certainly two, if not all of the Atlantic provinces, through their governments, have objected to the repealing of Section 272 of the *Railway Act*. This does touch upon certain areas of federal-provincial relations. As I understand it, there have been some discussions with the milling associations, but this is a pretty unilateral thing in terms of the eastern provinces, especially Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, and it will have a tremendously adverse effect.

For those reasons I certainly have no hesitation in moving the reasoned amendment. In this way further consideration can be given to clause 15 of this bill and the House will have a chance to consider fully the potentially negative implications of the elimination of this clause, an action which I suggest would come back to haunt all members, certainly those from eastern Canada who would vote for the bill and thereby against the subsidy on the export of wheat and flour.

Mr. Goodale: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It seems to me the amendment the hon. member has just presented to the House is one about which I would have some grave reservations, and if it is Your Honour's inclination to reserve your decision on the admissibility of the amendment I would certainly like to reserve the opportunity to debate the issue in full at some later stage.

An hon. Member: Oh, no! Accept it, or let's hear you now.