

Government Orders

I hope that the government of the day will rethink this position, particularly with respect to the at and east subsidy, go back to square one and consult Canadians, because they have some good ideas. We do not have to go through with this. I hope the government will consider some amendments when this bill reaches committee.

Mr. Laporte: Madam Speaker, I appreciated the hon. member's speech. In fact, it sounded like it was written by a social democrat.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Samson: That's the way they are. They campaign like New Democrats and govern like Tories.

Mr. Laporte: Madam Speaker, I would like to make a comment and then ask the hon. member a question.

I appreciate his quote from Minister Pickersgill, who pointed out that contrary to the government's statement that this bill was originally put in place not so much to help Halifax and Saint John compete with American ports, but to aid those ports in competing with the St. Lawrence ports. That was the original purpose of this bill.

Early this morning the transport committee, of which I am a member, met with members from the Atlantic Provinces Transportation Commission. The government has ignored this bill for some eight months. This is only the second day of debate on it. I find it quite insulting that it would bring it up on the very day when the transport committee is meeting with people from the Atlantic Provinces Transportation Commission. We had to cut our meeting short in order to come to the House to debate this bill. It is just another example of how this government really does not give a damn about the maritimes or the at and east bill.

Some excellent presentations were made to the committee today. One of the presentations was by Dover Flour Mills, who are very concerned about this bill. John Doering pointed out on behalf of Dover Flour Mills and the milling industry that their concern with respect to this bill is not about competing with the Americans, it is competing with the St. Lawrence ports. Their problem in dealing with the the Americans is the enhancement program to which the Americans are contributing this

\$900 million. In light of that, I would like to quote from Mr. Doering's brief.

He does not even call it the free trade agreement, because they know there is nothing free in that agreement. He states:

In light of the Canada—U.S. Trade Agreement we have agreed to move away from subsidies, but the U.S. agricultural sector which includes agri-business, will continue to be subsidized and benefit from a continuation of the Export Enhancement Policy which, more than anything else, has been and will continue to be the instrument of the destruction of the Canadian milling industry. That policy allows mills in the U.S. to run at full capacity while we languish at two-thirds capacity. Investment in production efficiencies or upgrading is unlikely to be considered attractive in the Canadian milling industry and, in this weakened state, we are asked to move aggressively toward competing for business in the U.S. against a very strong U.S. milling sector, who already have much lower wheat costs.

Added to this, the U.S. mills have a transportation advantage as U.S. railways have a less restrictive tax regime and lower operating costs for fuel taxes.

That is an example of how the free trade agreement affects the maritimes. During the campaign and again in his speech, the hon. member has made some very interesting comments and has been very vocal against the free trade agreement. There is some concern with the Liberal leadership these days because of rumours that not everybody is opposed to the free trade agreement.

I would like the member to reconfirm that he, in fact, is opposed, if not to free trade itself, certainly to the free trade agreement, and that he will oppose this bill and any measures that are going to limit real free trade in this country.

Mr. Harvard: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre. I can say to him and to this House, unequivocally and categorically, that I was against the free trade agreement in the election campaign and I remain against the free trade agreement.

Our former leader, the right hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, has said several times that when it comes to the free trade agreement he is on the right side of history. After only a year of that agreement in place, I believe he has already been vindicated. As time goes on, there will be more and more evidence that the free trade agreement is going to harm this country irreparably.

The hon. member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre asked whether I was against the bill and if I would continue to be against the bill. The answer is yes.