There are several comments I would like to make about clause 15, and some general comments about the bill.

Clause 2 refers to the Adult Occupational Training Act. That act will exist no longer. In fact the explanatory notes state, and I quote:

This amendment would remove certain statutory restrictions now applicable in respect of training allowance rates—

In effect, they would be determined by regulation. In other words, you go from statute to order in council.

Clause 3 deals with the Company of Young Canadians. That authorizing statute is being repealed. There will be no further ministerial discretion involved.

Clause 6 deals with the Family Allowances Act. A statutory authority is involved. There is some protection in the statute. Hon. members may agree or disagree, but at least there is a statute and it can only be changed by statute. With the amendment in clause 6, there is a transfer of federal statute to provincial regulation. The present statute can only be changed following a debate in this House. The regulation can be changed by any order in council.

Further on in the bill we come to the Industrial Research and Development Incentives Act. That basically is restricted to certain rates of the previous year. It is interesting to note that under this amendment the very act can be repealed by order in council. This is a federal statute which provides funds for necessary research. These funds are to be frozen at certain levels because of restraint. According to clause 12 the governor in council may repeal the act holus bolus. There will be no further need to come back to parliament.

Clause 14 affects members from the west. It deals with the Western Grain Stabilization Act. Here again payments are made under an act. Under this clause the Minister of Finance (Mr. Macdonald) by order in council will authorize payments out of the fund.

Next is clause 15, the clause in which I am vitally interested. It will have an adverse effect, not just on the Atlantic ports of Halifax and Saint John, but on several terminal points and elevator places along the St. Lawrence River and in the Lakehead.

Under clause 15, Section 272 is being cut out of the Railway Act. This may not be as important as the Crowsnest Pass rates. The Crowsnest rates are preferred subsidy rates for the movement of western grain through the Crowsnest Pass westward. This is very important to many people, although not necessarily the Minister of Transport who is trying to change this. In any event our western grain moves to the western ports and on to the international market at a lower price than if the companies had to pay compensatory rates. Obviously the 1896 rates are cheaper than the 1976 rates. However, Bill C-19 does not touch the Crowsnest Pass rates.

I do not know whether this includes Thunder Bay, but certainly every member in eastern Canada, Atlantic Canada and eastern Quebec should be violently objecting to this amendment. It is as basic and necessary to Atlantic Canada as the Crowsnest rates are to western Canada. Just because we are dealing with smaller amounts of money does not make the principle any different. Just eight words in Bill C-19 eliminate forever the statutory guarantee with regard to the flow of export grain and flour through our Atlantic ports.

To be fair, while this debate was going on the Minister of Transport made a proposal which the Canadian Milling Association has reluctantly accepted. I understand it was a take it or leave it proposition. The minister, not by a bill or an amendment to the bill, but by a statement in the House and a press statement outside, offered a two-year program on a reduced scale involving the payment of certain millions of dollars to assist the export market. As I understand the statement of the minister, this only applies to export flour, not export grain. More important than that, we had the minister's statement today concerning a potential two year program which has no statutory authority and could be changed by whimsy tomorrow, or if a new minister came in could be changed overnight. There is no guarantee that this program will be in operation for two years, quite apart from what is going to happen after the two years.

• (1730)

There are a lot of milling towns in eastern Quebec and along the St. Lawrence Seaway that are going to be adversely affected by this bill. Everyone in the milling trade says that if we lose that assistance which helps us export flour to international markets at the present rate, which is frozen under the act—it is the 1966 rate for flour so it is a preferred rate—we will lose the last of our flour export customers. I do not know how many members opposite know this, but the ironic thing is that our biggest customer is Cuba, which takes 350,000 metric tons under a trade deal whereby Russia purchases the flour and then delivers it to Cuba. I am informed that with removal of the subsidy the price of this export flour will go up by $15 to $20 per ton. If this happens, Mr. Speaker, it will effectively eliminate the Cuban market which now takes two thirds of our flour exports. This will mean in turn that workers in mills in Atlantic Canada, and workers in the ports of Halifax and Saint John, will not be required, and that several mills between Thunder Bay and the Atlantic ports will close down.

We are trying to increase our exports at a time when our balance of payments is so unfavourable, Mr. Speaker, yet we are removing provisions that have been entrenched in a statute for a long time. I am not talking about billions and billions of dollars, I am talking about a total of $17 million of which $3 million is assistance for export flour. For the last three years the Minister of Transport has been using his private jet and has run up a bill of roughly three quarters of a million dollars, some of which is legitimate, some of which has been a little too extravagant.

Under the eastern feed freight assistance program there is something like $20 million to $24 million involved, though there is a declining scale. The multiplier effect of the feed freight assistance program or the assistance for the export of flour and/or grain far outweight this amount in the return of