

cated by such an action, it sent some information to the government about some potential offsets.

When the hon. member for Annapolis Valley—Hants spoke last, just a few weeks ago, he indicated that five years later the government had not even responded to the submission from the Atlantic Provinces Transportation Commission. It talked about possible offsets for the at and east. Indeed, on February 19, the Commission slightly revised what it had given to the government in 1985 and sent it in. At the time he spoke about April 30, the government still had not responded.

We went into committee and we heard a lot of individuals during the proceedings. One of the things that we found surprising was that the industry members who were most affected had no question about the negative impact that was going to take place with the sudden loss of the at and east legislation without any consultation by the federal government.

The federal government did not come in and say: "Look, we are rethinking our national transportation policies, and we think that because the at and east is flawed it must change or go." It did not say that. What the government did was come in and say: "It is gone." The hon. member for Halifax West said it best. He said: "It is a *fait accompli*. Whatever this government wants, it gets." That is what was said. It is in *Hansard*. "It is a *fait accompli*." If the government wants it, the government gets it.

The effect of these amendments is to try to rescue the government. What the government did was show government at its worst: it came in with legislation that is fundamentally flawed. It has not undergone the test of consultation with the industry sectors affected, and now it is trying to play catch-up.

It was pretty clear. During the committee hearings I asked Mr. Armitage from the Atlantic Provinces Transportation Commission: "Do you believe the loss of the at and east and the resulting traffic loss may have an impact on the viability of the main line of CN?" In his response, which is in the *Minutes and Evidence of Proceedings*, he said: "I do not think it is going to jeopardize the line, but it will certainly have an impact on the viability of that line."

Government Orders

We talked to Mr. Doering from Dover Mills and asked him whether he was consulted prior to the loss of the at and east. Dover Mills is the only flour mill in eastern Canada. Mr. Doering said: "In terms of what it has done for Dover Mills, first of all were we consulted? No, the industry was not consulted."

I asked Mr. Russell from the Maritime Farmers' Union specifically, because of the lack of consultation and the sudden withdrawal on July 15, 1989 of the at and east regulations, what it would do. I said: "What is it going to do to the grain elevator in Halifax?" We already know that the grain elevator in Saint John has had to close with the resultant loss of jobs and moneys from the local economy there. I said: "Will there be an effect on the agricultural industry in Atlantic Canada?" He said: "I guess the breaking point for us would be if the situation reached the point where the Halifax elevator had to close. It would be Doomsday for us."

Mr. Speaker, 65 per cent of traffic through the very elevator in Halifax, which Mr. Russell says if closed would spell Doomsday for the agricultural industry in Atlantic Canada, is as a result of the at and east legislation and subsidy. What does the government do when it gets itself caught in the wringer—and I will not say any more than that in this place—it comes out with a study. It came out, I believe sometime in March, with a press release. After five years from the point in time that the Atlantic Provinces Transportation Commission stated that if this was going to be eliminated they would have to have some offsets and they would be a leader in this case. Five years after, in an effort of damage control, we have a news release from the Communications Branch of Agriculture Canada which states that we are now going to study it. It states that the study will address concerns about the future of grain handling facilities in the Atlantic region.

• (1230)

This is certainly what you call closing the barn door after you have let the horse out. We heard from witness after witness at the committee that by the time the government has decided to study it, we have already had untold economic devastation in Atlantic Canada. We have already had a grain elevator close in Saint John. We have already lost at least \$15 million from the Port of Halifax economy as a result of what it has done.