

*Agricultural Stabilization Act*

Quebec and elsewhere screaming that it is tough out there, one can be assured that it is twice as tough in Atlantic Canada, because the farmers of Atlantic Canada import feed and grain from Central Canada for their livestock. The producers of Atlantic Canada spend as much as 30 per cent to 35 per cent of their over-all costs bringing grain into the Atlantic region. Right now, the subsidies that have been paid over the years to bring that grain into Atlantic Canada are being eroded. We are seeing the Government move to increase freight rates through those Crown corporations which are responsible for moving freight in Atlantic Canada.

For the Atlantic Provinces, and particularly the island provinces of Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland, whenever there is an over-all increase in freight rates, the cost of living and the cost of doing business is affected. Moving things by freight to Newfoundland is not a question of taking the scenic route by the sea versus some other route. When there is bulk material that needs to be moved over 90 miles of water, the sea is the only way to go.

When dramatic increases are applied with no thought to the effect of those increases, the net result is a dramatic increase in the cost of living. In fact, when unemployment rates in most provinces went down three-tenths of 1 per cent, it went up 2.3 per cent in Newfoundland, due in large measure to the Government's move to increase freight rates to an island province where no other alternative is available for moving grain, livestock or consumable goods. The Government brought in an increase with no thought to its impact on the people of that province.

With those few words and with a great deal of humility, as a man who has much to learn—has barely scratched the surface—but has a passion for the difficulties of farmers, I urge Hon. Members to see this Bill passed in reasonable time.

**Mr. Hovdebo:** Mr. Speaker, I have a comment to make to which the Hon. Member might like to add. I would point out to the Hon. Member that his knowledge of the primary industry of fishing gives him the kind of knowledge and authority required to speak on the problems of farmers. Their problems are very similar and have the same effect.

I appreciated particularly the Hon. Member's last words regarding transportation. The farmers and other producers in remote areas are affected by transportation costs. For example, I feel that Saskatchewan and other areas like the Peace River country are remote areas. By setting up increases in freight rates on a percentage basis, when those in the remote areas are already paying more than those who are closer to central Canada, a real penalty is put on those who live farther away from the market. That penalty then becomes a part of the cost of production to the farmer and the fisherman. If a farmer has to pay an extra dollar a bushel to ship his grain, that means he receives a dollar a bushel less. If the price of grain is set at \$7 at Thunder Bay, the farmer in the Peace River country receives only \$5. I appreciated the approach taken by the Hon. Member because it had not been taken previously.

**Mr. Tobin:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member for his generosity. I was terrified that he was going to ask me some complex questions about a subject about which I admit freely I do not have a great deal of expertise.

Indeed, one of the approaches that is being taken by the Government that concerns me is its approach to the agricultural community. This approach affects the notion that people have the ability to choose where they want to live, and to have a life-style that is uniquely their own in the case of those who have lived in rural areas for hundreds of years. If these people are not actively supported, then at least they ought not to have difficulties placed in their way for choosing to live a certain life-style.

In the past, we always had the notion of regional development and regional assistance. As a goal, we wanted to remove regional disparities. We were trying to provide, at the very minimum, services to meet the basic needs and requirements of the people across this land on an equal basis.

• (1530)

I believe the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion (Mr. Stevens) has a somewhat different attitude. It is an attitude which indicates, "User-pay. That is the concept we shall apply." It is an attitude which indicates that those who live in the areas of the largest population shall benefit first and foremost from the services of the Government. I don't object to that, I really don't. But I believe that those who live in the rural areas, off the beaten path, and who have lived there for generations, choosing a life-style which reflects rural Canada, or the north, should also be able to expect the benefit of services and programs of the Government of Canada. But that is not the attitude taken by this Government which is too much concerned with a free market, private sector approach to providing goods and services to Canadians.

I am a free enterpriser from the word go. If I wanted to sell "rat pack" T-shirts, I would go out to the biggest marketplace, because that would make sense. I wouldn't go to a place where there are the least number of people. But the Government is elected to represent all of the people no matter where they live in this country. It has an obligation to understand and to empathize with all of the people no matter where they live or what their circumstances might be. The Government's kind of market-place mentality will lead us to the point where we will have first, second, third and fourth class citizenships. That is a step in the wrong direction, Mr. Speaker.

My colleague talked about farmers who live off the beaten path, who do not live on the main transportation routes, whose business is not adjacent to the major market areas, and the additional cost they must bear to produce and get their product to market. He has concern about the cost of transportation and this Government's approach to it. I suspect that we understand each other very well.

**Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak on Bill C-25, an Act to amend the Agricultural Stabilization Act. First, I would like to define