

situation such as represented by Bill C-26 with a termination of a longstanding subsidy program has caused serious economic dislocation for the affected regions and industries in Saint John and Halifax.

Second, this bill was on the Order Paper for seven months before it was brought before this House and there has been serious economic upheaval created in the maritimes by a *de facto* decision of a department of this government. This was done not because of any instructions, order or decision made in this House. If Your Honour so finds that there is a *prima facie* case, I would be pleased to make the appropriate motion.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest and I am a little disappointed that the hon. member did not give us an advance warning that he intended to raise this question of privilege. That would have given us a chance to look at the arguments he wanted to make and the issues he wanted to address.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the Chair can assist the hon. parliamentary secretary. The hon. member has raised an interesting and complex argument. He has argued it in a very succinct fashion and I thank him for it.

If the hon. parliamentary secretary would like to adjourn this over until tomorrow afternoon, I would be very pleased. I notice the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands is rising. Given the argument that has been put forward, it might be appropriate. If so, I certainly will do so.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, in fact, that is what I was going to request, that we be given some time to look at the hon. member's arguments and to consider our own so that we can properly address the issue.

• (1530)

Mr. Speaker: I have to say that whatever my ruling on the application might be, it would not interfere with debate continuing on the bill. The hon. member has made it very clear that the complaint is in terms of the action by the two railways and the department before this bill became law. Whatever happens in the debate takes nothing away from the argument that the hon. member has put forward.

Government Orders

I see the hon. member is indicating his agreement, as is the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands, to put the matter over so that the Chair can hear further argument tomorrow. Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

RAILWAY ACT

MEASURE TO AMEND

Hon. Shirley Martin (for the Minister of Transport) moved that Bill C-26, an act to amend the Railway Act (grain and flour subsidies), be read a second time and referred to a legislative committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to open the debate on second reading of Bill C-26, an act to amend the Railway Act. This government is committed to building a strong economy, an economy encouraged by incentive and opportunity, an economy which is competitive with the world's trading nations.

In order to fully achieve this goal we must create a solid base which will allow our economy to flourish in coming years. Measures which seek to control the deficit and reduce the national debt are an essential element of this foundation for the future. Equally, measures which seek to establish a sound fiscal framework to sustain a continued economic development are also essential to our purpose.

These objectives are reflected in this government's commitment to a sound transportation policy. Transportation is and always will be at the heart of our nation's economy. That is why we have undertaken to provide Canadians with a safe, efficient and effective transportation system. This commitment is the core around which our policy of economic regulatory reform was built.

With the advent of the free trade policy and the role played by transportation in our economic development, it is becoming increasingly vital as we enter this new decade and in the next century. A cost effective transportation system is essential if Canada is to preserve and enhance its position in world trade. Therefore, the bill now before this House seeks to eliminate a subsidy which has outlived its original purpose and has become a burden on the public purse.