

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

**RAILWAY ACT**

## MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Bouchard (Roberval), that Bill C-26, an act to amend the Railway Act (grain and flour subsidies), be now read a second time and referred to a Legislative Committee; and on the amendment of Ms. Clancy (p. 8227)

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne):** When the House rose at one o'clock we had just concluded hearing the remarks of the hon. member for Egmont. I see that it is not possible now to proceed with the question and comment period.

We will then resume debate with the hon member for Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing.

**Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing):** Madam Speaker, it is quite clear that there is a crisis in Atlantic Canada, particularly as a result of the decline of its main industry, the fishery. Under the circumstances one would expect the federal government to be supportive of that region, to assist in economic development and social adjustment and to assist in efforts to build the economy.

As the Atlantic economy has gone from great difficulty to crisis this government has watched and waited. Like Nero who fiddled while Rome burned, this government has sat on the sidelines not helping the region in its time of need.

We have seen large numbers of government programs and amendments to government policies which have worsened the situation in Atlantic Canada. Today, we are discussing one further negative implication for that region, Bill C-26.

These policy alternatives of the government have continued to make an already grave situation worse. We have seen VIA Rail cuts which have hurt the region. We have seen amendments to unemployment insurance which have hurt the region. We have seen cuts to regional economic expansion programs which have hurt the region. We have seen high interest rates and a high dollar which have made it more difficult for that region's products to be competitive. We have seen cuts to the

provinces for health and post-secondary education. As well, we have seen the beginnings of the introduction of the goods and services tax.

These are all policies of this government which further harm the economy of Atlantic Canada and further hurt Canadian families in that region. Of course, the approach of the Progressive Conservative government to the regions has been its typical, obsessive, philosophically driven, free enterprise mentality. Pragmatism and common sense are thrown to the wind, as are Canadians and their families thrown on the scrap heap.

The government appears to have forgotten, or it does not care that vicious budget cuts throw people out of work and take food from the mouths of their children and themselves. People suffer from these PC policies, and suffer dearly. Tory times are indeed tough times for ordinary Canadians and their families.

This is not so for the wealthy and for large corporations, or for the economically strong regions of Canada. The less well off regions and middle and lower income Canadians suffer greatly. Neo-conservatism and this Progressive Conservative government on the one hand and the less well off on the other hand clearly do not mix.

Today, we are considering Bill C-26, a further blow to the Atlantic Canadian economy. The at and east program which is being eliminated by Bill C-26 pays a subsidy to railways on export grain and flour moving through eastern Canadian ports.

This program was introduced in part to ensure that the ports of Halifax and Saint John, two important ports which are ice-free in the winter, could handle grain effectively and efficiently. The program has proved very beneficial to Halifax and Saint John. Almost a million tonnes of grain and flour were moved through these ports under the at and east program.

The elimination of this program will take about \$30 million and 573 direct jobs, as well as 250 indirect jobs, out of the Maritime economy, an economy which is already suffering greatly from the decline of its main resource.

Further, the elevators at Halifax and Saint John will almost certainly close, meaning further job losses. If the Halifax elevator closes the only flour mill in Atlantic Canada will close, causing even further job losses. Livestock producers in the Maritime provinces will