

Government Orders

That Bill C-76, in Clause 21, be amended by replacing lines 4 and 5, on page 14, with the following:

"subsequent crop year shall be determined by".

Motion No. 14

That Bill C-76, in Clause 21, be amended:

(a) by replacing line 6, on page 16, with the following:

"181.18 (1) During 1999, the Minister shall, in"; and

(b) by replacing lines 13 to 15, on page 16, with the following:

"and on the sharing of efficiency gains as between shippers and railway companies.

(2) The Minister shall, as part of this review, determine (a) whether the repeal of this Division and Schedules I, II and III will have a significant adverse impact on shippers; and (b) whether this Division and Schedules I, II and III should be repealed.

181.19 If the Minister determines, pursuant to paragraph 181.18 (2) (b), that this Division and Schedules I, II and III should be repealed, then this Division and those Schedules shall be repealed on a day to be fixed by order of the Governor in Council."

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ) moved:

Motion No. 17

That Bill C-76 be amended by deleting Clause 21.

Motion No. 18

That Bill C-76 be amended by deleting Clause 22.

Motion No. 19

That Bill C-76 be amended by deleting Clause 23.

Motion No. 74

That Bill C-76 be amended by deleting Schedule I, on pages 39 to 45.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table this series of amendments to Bill C-76, more specifically to the part of the bill which repeals the Western Grain Transportation Act and which transfers, at least as regards that part of Bill C-76, the railway line regulations to the National Transportation Act, 1987.

These amendments are tabled for a simple reason. We feel it is unfair to apply a double standard when it comes to streamlining railway operations in western and in eastern Canada.

Indeed, several sections of Bill C-76 seek to maintain western lines used for grain transportation, for reasons of public interest. In other words, under Bill C-76, a western line will be maintained if it is deemed to be of public interest, even if it is not cost effective, as long as it is used to transport grain.

However, the rules are different in eastern Canada, and that is why we speak of a double standard. Indeed, at least until the Minister of Transport tables appropriate legislation, some branch lines and main lines are being closed in the east, particularly in Quebec, based only on cost effectiveness. This is why we say there is a double standard. In the west, railway lines are being protected.

• (1620)

But the east is passed over because it is not cost effective. Just look at the double standard regarding the west: a huge compensation package, literally huge, will be paid to western producers to offset the decision to abolish the Western Grain Transportation Act.

And when the federal government commits to paying \$1.6 billion in tax-free compensation over the next three years to prairie farmers because it is going to phase out the Crow rate, a preferential rate, over a period of six years, that \$1.6 billion tax-free is really worth \$2.2 billion.

The federal government did not compensate Quebec industrial milk producers when it reduced dairy subsidies. Neither did it compensate them when it announced, after GATT negotiations, that it will be opening up our borders more and more to foreign competitors. Quebec farmers were not compensated when federal subsidies were cut here and there. They were told: "We are cutting, so deal with it".

The federal government is asking all Canadians, all Quebecers, to tighten their belts while it hacks away at the unemployment insurance fund, social assistance transfers to the provinces, post-secondary education and health, tax benefits for seniors. For example, when the Minister of Finance's first budget abolished the old age tax credit, it took \$500 million out of seniors' pockets. There is also the threat of cuts to old age security. But, at the same time, the federal government's old double standard comes into play: it is greasing the palms of western producers, the "cattlemen", to the tune of a \$2.2 billion package to compensate for the gradual phasing-out of the preferential rate for western grain transportation, which was already loathsome in itself. There was no uproar from Reform members regarding that move.

When subsidies are paid to their constituents, there are no shouts of protest. Not a peep from the hon. member for Capilano—Howe Sound, who merrily keeps hitting at the neediest in our society, day in, day out, and who even suggested abolishing all social programs in Canada. There were no protests from him when it was about subsidizing the people in western Canada, the people he represents. It is perfectly proper to pay billions of dollars to grain producers in the Prairies.

Yes, a double standard, because by getting rid of the Crow rate and paying a subsidy of \$2.2 billion, the government is upsetting the balance achieved at the end of the last century, in 1897, when this rate structure was introduced. It upsets the competitive balance that developed over time between western grain producers and eastern producers who are mainly involved in meat and dairy production.

Although the gradual phasing out of the Crow rate destroys this balance, there is no mention of compensation for eastern producers. Not a word about compensation for farm producers in Quebec. However, destroying this competitive balance will