

no". That attitude is as unjustifiable in this case as it is in the case of the goods and services tax. If people want to say no, they have some responsibility to come up with some alternatives. My New Democratic Party colleagues will do that later in this debate.

Back in the real world outside this Chamber, just what is happening? Since the at and east subsidy ended on January 31 due to one of the provisions of the bill which ends it retroactively, the grain elevator at Saint John, New Brunswick closed on February 28 with a loss of 90 jobs. The elevator in Halifax is in trouble and may be forced to close. The closure of the Halifax elevator will affect the economy of the Atlantic region in several ways.

First, the Halifax elevator plays a vital role as a grain storage facility. Without it Dover Flour Mills, the only flour mill in Atlantic Canada, would probably be forced to close.

Second, without the Halifax elevator shipping feed grains by lake vessel through the port of Halifax, the only competitive alternative to rail transport, would no longer be available. Based on past experience this would result in an increase in the rail rates for domestic feed grains that livestock and poultry producers in the maritimes depend on.

Third, local breweries will face similar problems as they will no longer be able to use water transport for malt barley.

Closure of the grain elevators alone will result in the loss of 573 jobs at the ports of Halifax and Saint John. In Saint John 90 jobs; Halifax, 483 jobs. Another 250 indirect jobs may be lost as well. The closure of Dover Flour Mills would result in another 45 jobs being lost and the loss of a local market for producers of milling wheat.

Livestock and poultry producers in the maritimes are already at a disadvantage when competing with Ontario and Quebec producers. In the opinion of the Atlantic Provinces Transportation Commission any feed cost increases could place those industries in jeopardy.

What has been the government's response? In response to political pressure from many sectors, including the New Democratic Party but certainly not solely—a lot of people have been involved, particularly many from

Government Orders

Atlantic Canada—the Deputy Prime Minister and the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board announced on May 16 that Agriculture Canada would conduct a study on the future of the grain elevators in the Atlantic region. The study will look at the Halifax elevator, the Saint John elevator, a proposed elevator in Summerside, and how they can be made more viable.

When he appeared before the committee on May 30, the Minister of Transport stated that the alternatives to eliminating the at and east put forward by the Atlantic Provinces Transportation Commission had not been studied. They had not even been studied and still we are getting this legislation in spite of the fact that they had been received over a year ago. He also refused to commit the government to any measures to offset the effects of cancelling the at and east.

There is also an impact on western Canada if this bill should go ahead. The loss of the at and east will mean higher freight rates for western Canada in grain, and flour mills outside central Canada will be hard hit because they will no longer be able to take advantage of the program to ship their flour.

At a time when we have the first ministers and the Prime Minister meeting just a few blocks away to try to salvage something of this dream called Canada—this active political will from the last century called Canada—it simply does not make sense for us to pretend that this country was ever a "natural economic unit".

This nation was built in defiance of all economic reality based on the classic definitions of a market economy and how it works. Hopefully some day, with changing demographics and population, it will be easier to service all our parts and give us all a chance at a good and productive life without subsidies.

• (1220)

However, you cannot take a small number of people spread over 4,000 miles or 5,000 miles in a narrow ribbon and expect to operate in the same way as if you were shipping from Chicago to New York, both major population areas. That is not what this country is about.

It appears that this is simply one more action of a government which, whether it is dealing with Canada Post or dismantling the social safety net with the scrap-