

*Government Orders*

It is indeed an honour for me to take part in this debate to address the matter that is before us, Bill C-26. I must admit that I feel some unease, I feel considerable trepidation because what we are dealing with here is Tory legislation. We know what Tory legislation has come to mean. I shudder to think what is going to be coming down the pike this afternoon at approximately 4.30. After five and a half years of Tory mismanagement, I can just imagine what is going to be in the budget document. But we will leave that for another moment.

I will not go into the history of the at and east subsidy at this particular time. Other members have done a very good job of that. The at and east subsidy had the effect of freezing rail shipping rates for grain at and east of Buffalo, New York and to eastern ports at 1960 levels for grain and 1966 levels for flour.

However, I think it is noteworthy to mention something that was said by the hon. Jack Pickersgill in 1966 when this particular legislation was under consideration. The then transport minister stated: "One of the aims of the subsidy was to ensure that we will have rates which will provide some inducement and incentive to shippers to use the facilities of Atlantic ports."

This is significant because it was seen then for what it really was and that is a regional program—and I want to underline that—a regional program. It has served the regions of the country well, not just the Atlantic region, although I would say particularly the Atlantic region, but also parts of Ontario as well as the grain growing areas of western Canada.

Despite the success of the program, despite the fact that regional programs in Atlantic Canada have already been cut 39 per cent in the past five years, despite the fact that Atlantic Canada is going through some very, very tough times right now, especially with respect to the fishery, despite the success of the at and east program which has been very important to the agricultural industry of this country, like so many other programs it has to be sacrificed.

Why? Because it does not fit the Tory agenda. It does not fit the Tory right wing economics. It does not fit the Tory market economy. It does not fit the Tory law of the jungle, and it does not fit the Tory withdrawal from almost everything that has made this country great. So

the at and east subsidy has to go because Tory theology says it must go, and so it goes.

It really does not matter what Canadians might say. It certainly does not matter what farmers might say or what port workers, mill workers or elevator workers might say. They really do not count. It only matters what Tory ministers say. The Tory ministers say that the at and east must go. In fact, the Tory ministers do not give a hoot about what is said in this House. The minister who opened second reading debate stated: "The subsidy was terminated on July 15, 1989." That is a direct quote from *Hansard*. How do you like that? The purpose of this Bill C-26 is to end the subsidy, but the minister says it was terminated last July 15.

Therefore, I ask the question, why are we here today? Why are we wasting our time? The government has already decided the subsidy is already terminated. We have been presented with a *fait accompli*. That to me is disgusting, for this is the purest form of contempt, contempt for Parliament, contempt for members of this House, contempt for the democratic process, and contempt for the Canadian people. The subsidy was terminated on July 15, 1989. I want to repeat that so that it really sinks in: the subsidy was terminated July 15, 1989.

It takes a particular brand of arrogance to say something like that, to do something like that. But of course we already know that Tory arrogance knows no bounds. There is really nothing new about it.

I want to remind you, Madam Speaker, of something else that this government did back in August, 1989. The Department of Finance placed two full page ads in major newspapers across the country which stated: "On January 1, 1991, Canada's federal sales tax system will change. Please save this notice."

• (1220)

Without a word of formal debate in this House, the government had the arrogance to tell the country that Canada's federal sales tax system will change. "Please save this notice". That, to me, was arrogant. It was in contempt of this House and it drew a rare rebuke from the Speaker of this Parliament.

But this government, it seems, Madam Speaker, never learns anything. This time it tells us that, as far as the at and east subsidy is concerned, the subsidy was terminated July 15, 1989.