

House could allow him two or three minutes if he can complete his remarks in that time.

Mr. Hopkins: I think I can finish in a couple of minutes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed that we do not see the clock?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Hopkins: As I said, Mr. Speaker, the Electoral Boundaries Commission was sympathetic, understanding, and logical. I say this because I know some of the people who appeared before it. Some were elderly and had never appeared before a commission, so naturally they were nervous. The commission gave them a very sympathetic hearing and was very understanding in its approach. That is a factor which I think must be mentioned.

I am basically very pleased with the work of the commission and I want to make it very plain that the size and the population of the new riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke do not bother me in the least. I know the area and many of the people. The people in that area are pleased to be tied together as they are by highway 17 and other key roads connecting the communities. This makes it a much easier job than having a large constituency where it is difficult to get to various communities. This is not now the case, but I hope the commissioners will take a second look at the representations of the townships of Bonfield and Calvin. Other than that I am totally satisfied with their work.

● (2200)

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

TRANSPORT—REQUEST FLOUR AND GRAIN RAIL SUBSIDIES BE REMOVED ONLY AFTER SEAWAY TOLLS INCREASED

Mr. Robert McCleave (Halifax-East Hants): Mr. Speaker, I think this is the fourth occasion at this particular time of night on which I have raised the question of the future of Section 272 of the Railway Act.

Under Bill C-87, the government's restraint program, section 272 of the Railway Act would be knocked out and along with it the rail flour and grain subsidies which affect Montreal, Saint John, Halifax, and probably other east coast ports. This is a serious matter for the ports of Halifax, Saint John, Montreal, and for every flour mill in Canada as well as for the grain growers of western Canada, so I think that in time one could muster up a pretty fair debate in this Chamber on the repeal of section 272.

Unfortunately the repeal of Section 272 would take effect only when the clause of Bill C-87 is passed to this

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effect. This means we could be here quite a while. As I have indicated, many Conservative members of parliament are concerned about this matter. I dare say we could entice such members as the hon. member for Saint John-Lancaster (Mr. Landers) into some public discussion of this matter, as well as any number of Liberal M.P.s from the city of Montreal because that port is affected.

The purpose of this hearing tonight is the question I asked the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) concerning the St. Lawrence Seaway and whether he intended to put up the tolls on the Seaway. As people are well aware, the deficit on the Seaway is expected to be \$12 million this year, which is almost the same as the subsidy that would be removed under Bill C-87. The Seaway has a debt of some \$700 million to \$800 million already behind it. The minister indicated last year that the increase in the Seaway tolls would not take place this year although he hinted that it would take place next year. My suggestion is that in justice both programs should accompany one another.

If there is to be a removal of the rail flour and grain subsidy on shipments through east coast ports there should also be something to make the St. Lawrence Seaway tolls higher, and both should happen at the same time. The doing away with the subsidy without an increase in the rate of the tolls would give Montreal an extra advantage over the ports of Halifax and Saint John. Having regard to competition among those three east coast ports I do not think one should do something which would help one to the disadvantage of the other. I suggest that the minister hold off the repeal of Section 272, at least this year, until he has put together his new transportation policy to replace the policy which his predecessor aptly described as a mess.

I will suggest something else which I have discussed with my colleagues. I think I can suggest this on behalf of the official opposition. If the minister will withdraw the clause—I think it is clause 15—of the restraint bill, C-87, then I think we could promise on the part of the official opposition that there would be perhaps only one speaker on the other parts of the restraint program in the House of Commons, and then reference to the committee, so that at least the restraint program could pass with a minimum of difficulty.

I think we could also present to the minister some suggestions for savings that would total much more than the subsidies which we suggest be kept on at least for this year and until a new transportation policy is developed. I say this most seriously. I realize, since this is probably a fresh idea, that the minister would like to talk about it with the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Chrétien). Perhaps the President of the Treasury Board would like to spell out some of the multimillion dollar savings that we actually have on the list at this point. That is a suggestion. Otherwise, as I told the President of the Treasury Board, if we are going to debate Bill C-87 and they try to remove the grain subsidy, that debate could keep us here until Christmas.

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I certainly welcome the hon. member's offer. As I understand it, if that section were deleted there would