

One of the important aspects which is emerging from consideration of a whole range of government initiatives since the last election has, of course, to do with the follow up to the implementation of the free trade agreement. It is not surprising to see this subsidy go the way of so many other supports for agricultural production and marketing and to see the link between the dismantling of our support framework for agriculture and the follow-through to the free trade agreement.

We have seen time and again that this government, whether with regard to western grain farmers, pork producers or other elements of the agricultural community, has been quite willing to surrender to the vigorous and aggressive subsidization of American and European agricultural exports. While the United States is in clear contravention of Article 7041 of the free trade agreement by providing export enhancement and export subsidy programs to its agricultural producers, we in Canada have been rolling over and playing dead. We have been unilaterally disarming our farmers in the face of increasing subsidized competition by the United States and the Europeans. We are left with absolutely no room to manoeuvre when it comes down to negotiating a framework of subsidies that is fair and equitable in the North American market or in the GATT negotiations on the world scale for agricultural commodities.

Instead, this government is reducing the competitiveness of our farmers who are producing for Canadian consumption and those who are producing for export.

You cannot help but view this particular subsidy cut-back in the broader context of this government's post free trade agenda. It goes even further than that. It is a dismantling, as we have said on this side of the House time and again, of the fabric and framework that has held this country together.

The Minister of State for Transport talks about how transportation must continue to play its role as we enter the new decade and the next century. She talks about creating a transportation system which is efficient, which takes account of the intermodal competition and which will meet the needs of moving our products into the next century.

However, she ignores the history of Canada. In the creation of our transportation network, in particular our rail transportation network, the imperatives of geography were defied. While recognizing the question of efficiency, it was realized that there was a far greater

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objective, that being the objective of preserving the integrity of a country. The process of building that transportation network from east to west cross this country allowed for the west to be settled and built up and allowed the east to play a vital role in Confederation.

If it was not for the contribution by Sir John A. Macdonald and others at the birth of this country, we would not have a country. We all know that the simple expedient for developing a transportation network and for thereafter enabling that transportation network to do its job, to move goods and services to market and to consumers, would have been to set up trunk networks to move the goods straight down into the United States and take advantage of their much larger population and their already developed rail network.

We did not do that. We paid the price. We developed our own network parallel to that of the Americans and our forefathers realized how important it was to preserve that system. They realized how necessary it would be to continue to subsidize transportation east to west if we were not going to be absorbed through the natural north-south forces into the arms of the United States. That is an option that is always available to us and this government seems to be taking the easy way out and allowing this to occur.

That is the underpinning of the abandonment of this system. We on this side of the House recognize that from time to time we have to review the nature and design of our transportation subsidy programs to make sure that they continue to perform the role that was intended, that they do not prop up inefficient lines of production and inefficient means of transportation, but at the same time one does not simply hack the arms of the system apart without thinking, without forward planning, without examining the consequences to the users and to those consumers who are ultimately affected.

That is what this government has done with the elimination of the at and east program. That is what it has done with the cut-backs to VIA Rail. That is what it has done with the cut-backs in so many areas. The government has a hack and slash policy with no forethought. If we have to reverse the process and redesign the transportation systems and links that we have abandoned, it will cost us that much more because of the short-sightedness of this government and the short-sightedness of Bill C-26, an bill which attempts to