

Transportation

through eastern ports on an equal basis with wheat because it has always been considered to be in the public interest to export our wheat in the form of flour so as to provide the extra earning to the Canadian people.

In the bill which was reported by the committee in its newly printed form the amendment which we now propose was not complete, although we thought at the time that it was, because of some peculiarities in shipping into which I would just as soon not go as I believe that hon. members are not especially interested in those details. The fact was that it would not have established the full measure of equality that we had intended between wheat and flour shipped through eastern ports. It was felt that it would discriminate against mills in western Canada.

● (6:00 p.m.)

I am going to ask my colleague the Minister of Fisheries to move an amendment which, after reciting all the usual verbiage, would seek to strike out line 24 on page 43 of the bill and to substitute therefor the words "east of the 90th degree of west longitude". That is west of the head of the lakes. It means that in the case of flour shipped from the head of the lakes, which I am told quite often is moved by rail rather than by water, as is most of the wheat, the shipment will be governed by the same relative rates as from the Georgian Bay ports. This should have the effect of giving a more assured supply of flour for export through the Atlantic ports and at the same time be equitable to mills in western as well as eastern Canada.

Mr. Robichaud: I move:

That Bill C-231, an act to define and implement a national transportation policy for Canada, to amend the Railway Act and other acts in consequence thereof and to enact other consequential provisions, be amended by striking out line 24 on page 43 thereof and by substituting therefor the following: "east of the 90th degree of west longitude;"

Mr. Bell (Saint John-Albert): Mr. Chairman, I want to indicate our support for this amendment. As one who has been interested in flour shipments for obvious reasons, I am glad we now have the whole matter finally unravelled. I know that the milling and shipping of flour is a very complicated subject, even more complicated than the question of freight rates, but I cannot for the life of me find where we went astray in this new bill.

The minister pointed out the importance of this amendment. Like him I am in no position to go into details nor do I have the desire to

[Mr. Pickersgill.]

do so. It is very important that the balance of cost be kept in line so that grain can be milled in Canada and shipped particularly through the eastern ports to the various countries which contract for supplies. I hope that flour shipments are now put in exactly the same position they were before so far as the question of economics is concerned. In fact, I hope this amendment better it and that even more flour will be shipped. The railways are desirous of shipping all the flour they can. I am also sure that the mills in the west want this business and are probably inactive at the moment. Perhaps the port of Montreal is busy at the moment as a result of the work of ice-breakers and does not need the business as much as Saint John, but I would point out we in Saint John are very desirous of this lucrative flour business which assists all aspects of our port activities.

As I understand it, this amendment will affect all flour going through Halifax and Saint John to Cuba and like countries. If the second amendment made to the bill is adopted by the committee, about 50 per cent of our flour shipments would be affected. The present amendment extends protection to the mills in western Canada which supply about half our production. The minister understands our position. As long as shipments of flour at least remain in the advantageous position which existed before, we will have to be satisfied.

Mr. Olson: I want to indicate very briefly our support of this amendment, Mr. Chairman. I commend the minister for making this change in response to the representations made to him not only by several members of the house but also by the representatives of the flour milling industry. As the minister pointed out, a lot can be said about the importance of the amendment in bettering the position of mills farther west. It also provides increased opportunities for the eastern ports. As an indication to the minister of how important this amendment is, I point out it has been calculated that 7 million hundredweight of flour which would have been excluded was in fact moved into the ports of St. John's and Halifax—

Mr. Pickersgill: No, Saint John.

Mr. Olson: Yes, Saint John.

Mr. Pickersgill: I wish it had been St. John's.

Mr. Bell (Saint John-Albert): I don't.