

Privilege

[Translation]

• (1520)

PROTECTION AND REGULATION OF ATLANTIC FISHERIES

Mr. Fernand Robichaud (Beauséjour): Mr. Speaker, it is also my duty to present in the House a number of petitions from people in my riding, residents of Cap-Pelé and Petit-Cap. Your petitioners humbly state that Canada's sovereignty has been violated and its resources plundered, and that the fisheries are at the very heart of the Atlantic region's economy.

Therefore, your petitioners humbly pray and call upon Parliament to extend its jurisdiction to include the entire continental shelf, so that Canada can protect and regulate the fish resources that are vital to Atlantic fishermen.

[English]

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Hon. Roger C. Simmons (Burin—St. George's): Mr. Speaker, I have a total of 16 petitions from various parts of Canada, including many from the riding of my friend, the Leader of the Opposition, in Windsor, Ontario.

People in my riding and people all over this country by the hundreds of thousands, and particularly lower income people and those people who now have no income because of the collapse of the fishery of Atlantic Canada, are calling upon the government to withdraw the goods and services tax which is being proposed.

They appeal to the government to rethink, review and take this tax back to the drawing board. The tax will not work and this is just the first signal of a growing, all-out tax revolt. I have pleasure in tabling the petitions.

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QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

Mr. Speaker: Shall the questions be allowed to stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

PRIVILEGE

REMOVAL OF AT AND EAST PROGRAM

Mr. Rod Laporte (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise to bring to your attention a matter which I feel is a contempt of Parliament. It deals with Bill C-26, commonly referred to as the at and east program. I believe the action taken by Transport Canada and the Minister of Transport have usurped Parliament and in so doing have impeded the House in the performance of its function in respect of Bill C-26.

I propose very briefly to outline the relevant facts and state why I feel that a contempt of this House has been committed.

In last year's budget, it was announced that the at and east program would be eliminated effective July 15, 1989. This program is found in Section 281 of the Railway Act which provides a subsidy to railways that are hauling grain and flour to eastern ports, mainly Saint John and Halifax, provided certain conditions are met. This program has been in effect for 20 years and in fact a whole economy has been built up in the maritimes around this program.

First reading of Bill C-26 took place on June 16, 1989 and since then the bill has not seen the light of day in this House until today. In the meantime, a series of moves by Transport Canada have, in effect, eliminated this program. This started with a meeting held on May 4, 1989, by officials of Transport Canada. That meeting was confirmed in a letter to myself from the Minister of Transport in which he states, and I quote:

On May 4, 1989, Transport Canada officials held a meeting in Ottawa with representatives from affected organizations to provide information on the decision.

This was followed by correspondence from Mr. C. McElman, Director of Rail Freight Programs with Transport Canada. This correspondence discusses the removal of this program.

As a result of this meeting, correspondence and other discussions, both CP Rail and CN Rail stopped hauling grain and flour pursuant to this section. This was confirmed, first of all, by letter from CP Rail on September 22, 1989. It states: