

*Adjournment Debate*

Department of Insurance of the federal government. Under the Canada Pension Plan the Chief Actuary is required to put forward a report costing those proposals everytime there is an amendment. The conclusion of that report is as follows:

In our opinion, the enactment of Bill C-49 is expected to result in combined employee-employer contribution rates gradually increasing to be higher than projected in Statutory Actuarial Report No. 3 by 0.1 per cent of contributory earnings in the year 2005 and by 0.3 per cent of contributory earnings in the year 2025.

I think it is important to bear in mind this type of figure when we are talking about these particular amendments.

There are a lot of other points I should like to raise but I think I should reserve them for consideration in committee where I will be happy to discuss them with my hon. colleagues. I would therefore move second reading, Mr. Speaker.

## PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

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

### TRANSPORT—DATE OF DECISION ON USE OF REFRIGERATOR CARS TO TRANSPORT POTATOES—POSSIBILITY OF RATE INCREASE

**Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont):** Mr. Speaker, hon. members will recall that a week ago today I asked both the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) and the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) a question with respect to the current status of this matter. I see both parliamentary secretaries are here, so I hope we will get a double-barreled answer because a single-barreled answer has not been too productive in solving the issue. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Roy) and I have had a number of exchanges on the issue. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Pelletier) comes originally from New Brunswick and recognizes the importance of this question to both New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island as well as to other potato growers all across Canada.

I make no apologies for raising the issue again this evening, Mr. Speaker. I will continue to do so until we get satisfactory action from the government on this serious situation. It is one of the most serious that has confronted this most important industry for many years, namely, the future availability of basic transportation equipment for potatoes. I have raised this issue repeatedly because there has been rapid deterioration in the number and quality of railroad cars to transport potatoes from eastern Canada to the central Canadian markets.

As both parliamentary secretaries know, a number of studies have been done by their departments, the Department of Regional Economic Expansion and the Department of Indus-

[Mr. Lalonde.]

try, Trade and Commerce. I have heard rumours of studies done by other departments, as well as basic studies done by the Prince Edward Island Potato Marketing Board. I think the potato interest in New Brunswick as well has examined this problem seriously.

● (2200)

Frankly, the problem is that we are now down to approximately 1,000 refrigerator cars, whereas only two years ago we were operating well over 4,000 of them. Considering that the actual production of potatoes has not decreased significantly in the last half dozen years, that we have not been successful in transferring a large percentage of this perishable commodity to other sorts of transport, although there have been useful experiments involving intermodal transportation, and considering the strength of demand for this product at least in the foreseeable future, it is obvious that perhaps as much as 80 per cent of this important product will have to be moved by rail. Therefore we must have—we ought to have had it by now—a commitment from the federal government to make available adequate numbers of transportation vehicles.

Recently the transportation committee of the province of Prince Edward Island legislature examined this question seriously. Indeed not many weeks ago the legislature of my home province passed unanimously a resolution urging the federal government to take action to ensure that the rail cars will be available for the next shipping season. So far, the only assurances we have received from the CNR are less than satisfactory.

We know, for instance, that there will be a further decline in the number of reefer cars available for the next shipping season. The figure will be down to something like 700. Considering the condition of the reefer cars, the number available may be even smaller. In addition, we are assured that perhaps as many as 400 insulated boxcars, of 110,000 pound carrying capacity, will be available to transport potatoes to central Canadian markets. Mr. Speaker, I question how realistic CNR officials are in even making such suggestions, or suggesting such solutions. Considering the great problems the use of this equipment will create in warehousing, packaging and marketing, I am led to wonder if there has been any consultation with those who are directly involved.

Frankly, what concerns me is this. More than a month ago reports presented to the Minister of Transport, the Minister of Agriculture, and others made specific recommendations; however, I am not aware that there has been any significant consultation with the potato producers of eastern Canada, with potato shippers, with marketing boards directly concerned, or with the retailers in central Canadian markets who, in the final analysis, will distribute the product. Yet in the absence of prior consultation, any recommendations or any actions taken by the CNR could be counterproductive or destructive both to the general system of marketing of eastern Canadian potatoes and to the provision of employment which is so important to eastern Canada, given our current serious difficulties in unem-