

*National Transportation Act, 1986*

and we were forced to put them all in the name of the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin). Therefore, for those who are wondering why all of a sudden the Hon. Member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan does not have his name on these amendments, that is the explanation.

The motion which was originally in my name, I think, hits at the heart of the approach of the Government to the transportation sector, the financial sector and the energy sector, as well as other sectors. Very clearly it is a philosophical approach on the Government's part. It believes in free enterprise. It believes in the private sector and that the market-place is the be all and end all.

We in the New Democratic Party believe there is a need for the federal Government and the provincial, territorial and municipal Governments, at various points in time, to intervene in a way to provide some balance and protection for the consumers, for the communities, for the provinces and for the nation as a whole.

The amendment before us in effect amends Clause 3, which is headed "national transportation policy—declaration". The part we wish to see removed reads as follows, and I quote:

(b) competition and market forces are whenever feasible, prime agents in providing viable and effective transportation services—

I think it is important we examine that clause and our move to delete that paragraph in the context of that declaration, which I would like to quote. Under the heading "National Transportation Policy" it states:

It is hereby declared that a safe, economic, efficient and adequate network of viable and effective transportation services making the best use of all available modes of transportation at the lowest total cost is essential to serve the transportation needs of shippers and travellers and to maintain the economic well-being and growth of Canada and its regions—

There is clearly nothing to conflict with that statement and the move to delete subparagraph (b). In fact, Clause 3(1)(c) states very clearly that economic regulation is needed, and I quote:

Economic regulation of carriers and modes of transportation occurs only in respect of those services and regions where regulation is necessary to serve the transportation needs of shippers and travellers and such regulation will not unfairly limit the ability of any carrier or mode of transportation to compete freely with any other carrier or mode of transportation,—

We on this side believe that because of the geography of our country, because of where people have decided to live, to work, to raise a family, unlike the United States we are stretched in a very narrow ribbon across the 49th parallel, more or less, with the bulk of our population concentrated in the Windsor, Toronto, Montreal, Quebec City corridor. There is one kind of transportation infrastructure there. There are many more options to those who wish to travel or to ship goods. For the rest of us who live at great distances from the metropolitan area, whether it be Thunder Bay, Winnipeg, Regina, Moose Jaw, Prince Rupert, St. John's, Newfoundland, Halifax, or any of the other communities away from that narrow corridor of southern Ontario and Quebec, the market forces do not work the same way. We do not have the volumes on a consistent basis to allow for the kind of competition which I think quite

realistically can exist, for example, in the air side, in the triangle of Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal.

• (1710)

It is clear that all of us who work in the House and who have constituencies away from Ottawa know that the vast number of people are travelling out of Ottawa and into it, out of Toronto and into it, and out of Montreal and into it, and that there is no need for choice. There is need for competition in order to provide for quality service as well as frequency of service.

However, with respect to the Thunder Bays of the world, even though it has the twelfth largest airport in the country, we know that there is only a population of around 113,000 locally and perhaps another 100,000 regionally to draw on to feed the airlines. So competition is different there.

Quite frankly, we need some protection since, with low volumes, the major carriers with the largest equipment will perhaps bypass Thunder Bay or only service it at certain times of the day. We are already starting to see stacking in Thunder Bay, something which we have been seeing in Toronto for quite a while, as well as in the United States, where all the carriers come and go at the same time. This places incredible pressure on the infrastructures. It causes overcrowding and frustrates travellers.

In the region we are seeing a change. We are seeing more carriers functioning, although there are fewer and fewer owners of air carriers. The smaller ones seem to get gobbled up by the two major airlines.

When I flew out of Thunder Bay this week on the tarmac there was an Air Canada airplane with all its insignias. Beside it was an Air Ontario airplane with its new maple leaf up in the corner. Beside that plane was a smaller plane owned by Austin Air, again with a maple leaf up in the corner. This gobbling up of the transportation sector has caused an elimination of competition. I cannot fault the current Government for that since Bill C-18 is not now in place.

What has happened thus far on the air side is as a result of a policy decision made by, I suppose, the Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Fort Garry (Mr. Axworthy) when he was the Minister of Transport. It was his Government which opened up the skies and said: "We are going to have reverse onus. We are going to allow carriers to come and go as they will". The Conservative Government has inherited that situation, and my colleagues and I believe that it will make the situation worse. There will be less and less competition, as well as less service given to the people.

Sometimes I think that the Government wants it both ways. It has preached that deregulation will lead to lower fares. We know as a result of hearing the testimony before the Transport Committee that by and large the fares have bottomed out already. We have not seen much in the way of specials. In fact, we have seen an elimination of the ongoing seat sales. We are