

this worshipping at the altar of setting rates in a competitive market-place. The Tories are now in power. In Bill C-18 which has 200 odd pages—a highly complicated Bill—the Tories are taking the Liberal idea to its ridiculous conclusion. I asked myself the question, why is this Conservative Government madly dashing, in a country with 25 million people, with a geography not to be found anywhere else in the world, with our particular climate and with the pockets of population that we have, to emulate American deregulation taking place south of the border? Why are we trying to copy-cat the Americans in this whole question of deregulation?

Then, Mr. Speaker, I saw the CTV *Question Period* on October 19, 1986 when the Minister for International Trade (Miss Carney), better known as General Custer, had the following response to a question, and that is when I recognized what it was all about. She said that transportation matters were in the ambit of the discussions during free trade negotiations.

That is it, Mr. Speaker. In an effort to get a free trade agreement out of the United States, the Government is prepared once again to put our transportation system on the table. Once again, before we have gotten to a final agreement on free trade between Canada and the United States, the Government is offering up, on the altar of free trade, our transportation system.

• (1150)

We do not disagree that there are certainly changes to be made to the Canadian Transport Commission. Surely we do not disagree that certain changes ought to be made to the administration of the transportation system. We feel we ought to make the transportation system more sensitive to the economic needs of the regions. Certainly there is a need to look at the transportation system in order to ensure that it responds to the needs of Canadians who live in communities like mine, Sault Ste Marie and others across the country. Surely the whole concept behind revamping the system ought to be one of improving service to the people, not only in passenger service but in freight service as well. Yet we find we have difficulty with specific proposals within the Bill.

We have difficulty, for example, with a clause in the Bill that allows for transborder competition. American carriers would be allowed to come to Canada, do business in Canada and bid on business in Canada. Yet Canadian carriers would not be able to go to the United States to do the same things. To even think that there would be a level playing field in transportation is absolutely ridiculous. The reality is that the largest trucking company in Canada ranks about number 60 compared to trucking companies in the United States. That in fact means that Canadian trucking companies and railways are at a distinct disadvantage.

Already the railway companies are beginning to gear up for the implementation of Bill C-18. For example, the community in my riding in which I live, Capreol, was built on the development of the CNR as a switching centre for northeastern

Ontario. Today we have noticed that the CN has been cutting back on its workforce. In fact, it has been cutting back on its workforce in such a way that its commitment to safety is being called into question.

I just received a letter from a constituent who lives in that town. The letter reads:

Dear Mr. Rodriguez:

I am writing about the job cuts affecting the Car Department in Capreol on April 6, 1987.

As you will see in the attached form, on that date, Certified Car Inspectors will no longer be doing Roll-By train inspections in Capreol. This will be handled by Transportation employees.

He goes on to say the following:

Sir, I have spent four years learning my trade and have had to write an exam to receive my certificate (copy attached). Now, in one bold move, the Canadian National Railway will hand this work over to the running trades.

This is the same company, who, in March 1986, shortly after the Hinton wreck, sent out letters to each employee imploring us to work even more diligently in the area of safety. But, since March 1986, we are no longer allowed to do full inspections or Roll-Bys. I believe this severely hinders safety and shows us that CNR is not concerned at all about safety; the bottom line for them is *profit!*

I think the CNR is receiving that message from the Government. It is receiving the message that safety does not matter, nor does servicing communities and regional development. That will further erode the economic base and viability of communities in northern Ontario.

The same can be said of the airlines. Already Sault Ste Marie and London, Ontario, have lost their Air Canada links. In the Bill there is, for example, a provision for confidential rates. This means that larger producers will get the best rates from the railway companies. Those rates will be held in confidence and there will be no way for the small or medium-sized producers to get the same kind of rates.

The Conservative Government has said that one of the benefits of deregulation will be lower fares. History has shown that in a monopoly capital that is exactly how it works. In the short term, yes, there are lower fares. When there is no referee, everyone will get into the act. Anyone who can go down to the bank to borrow a few hundred thousand or a million bucks can buy a couple of airplanes and get into regional airlines. Then prices get lower in the dog-eat-dog competition. Then they all fall by the wayside and the big fish will eat the little fish. In the long run, prices will go up and up.

The Government must recognize that our railway and airline systems are tools for economic development and for distributing the population of Canada more evenly. The Government is sacrificing those carriers in the mythological proposal that we can compete south of the border and that competition will make us stronger.

I believe the amendment put forward by the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin) is a very wise one. We should send the subject matter of the Bill to the Standing Committee on Transport for further study and we should scrap the Bill for the moment.