

National Transportation Act, 1987

hardly ask the agency, any more than we can ask the Department, to work miracles with the number of person-years and resources the Department of Transport has been given. It can't. I repeat: If you are sincere and if you are honest when you say that you don't want to compromise air safety, more money will have to be spent. The appropriate administrative measures will have to be taken and the requisite support staff made available to do a satisfactory job, and not what your Department of Transport is about to do, which is to ask the companies to police themselves. That is what the Americans have done with their own airlines since deregulation, and the number of accidents or near misses in the United States has increased. I ask the Government: Please wake up before it is too late, otherwise Canada will see a repeat of the tragic incidents that have been occurring in the United States since deregulation.

I want to conclude with another quote from the CUPE Airline divisions.

● (1210)

[English]

The general chairperson of the CUPE airline division, V. J. Udvarhelyi, appeared before the Transport Committee. Let me read to the House an extract of the document that was tabled before the committee. It reads:

The Safety aspect is of monumental concern to us. Examples across the border of horribly low safety standards abound and while the Government would not knowingly create safety hazards, they will happen unless there is a budget for more safety inspectors and the requisite number of firemen at airports and a regulatory body with teeth. This should be a main concern, budget deficit notwithstanding. Safety has no monetary ceiling.

[Translation]

This, in a nutshell, is the philosophy of the Liberal Party of Canada, now in the opposition. We are afraid that deregulation will be a disaster and we have asked exactly what CUPE asked us when it testified before the Transport Committee: that we should have inspectors in sufficient number, an agency with the means and power to act and, above all, the necessary financial resources.

The number of firefighters at airports has decreased, while the Minister would have us believe that he has security at heart and takes steps to better protect the travelling public. It is clear that the number of inspectors and employees is not sufficient to meet the needs. And not only are there not enough inspectors and employees to do the job, but for certain positions such as firefighters working at airports who must take action in case of a tragedy and hurry on the landing strip to protect human lives on an aircraft which may be on fire, their number at Canadian airports has decreased. And the Minister would like to convince us that he has security at heart. Nonsense! On behalf of my Party, therefore, I repeat that we are deeply dissatisfied to see the Government move forward with this Bill which will result in the across-the-board deregulation of transportation in Canada. My only solace, before I resume my seat, is to say that to a certain extent, the

Senate at least has improved this legislation and we are grateful to its members for their contribution to Bill C-18.

[English]

Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak today on the motion before us on the amendments brought by the Senate but I cannot agree that small changes in spelling errors and French translation will really affect the basic principle of the Bill and provide the kind of transportation policy that Canada needs. We are very disappointed that many of the possible amendments that would have made the Bill a better one were not made and that the opportunity to do so was lost.

If there was ever a need for sober second thought, it was on this Bill. It is an issue of vital importance to all Canadians and, if I may say so, of particular importance to those of us in more remote and rural areas of Canada. It is an issue which affects everything from the price of a can of soup in my constituency to the export of car parts in other constituencies.

It is not an issue that is very exciting to many people and probably not even very exciting to the media. However, a Bill that throws out the chance of having a planned transportation system in favour of a market-directed game of chance has passed both Houses without substantive amendment, and the New Democratic Party says that that is a shame.

Deregulation conjures up very positive imagery. It has a nice ring to it: get the Government out of our hair, keep it off our backs, decrease bureaucracy and red tape. It appeals to the emotions of most Canadians. We must remember, however, that in the past, there was deregulation. Regulation came into being because deregulation was not working.

At second glance, deregulation as proposed in this legislation is, if I may use the analogy of one of our more sacred Canadian institutions, like a hockey game without a referee. The little guys will get beat up by the big guys and the people who paid to see the game will not see the game at all, but chaos.

● (1220)

Transportation and public policy related to it have gone hand in hand in developing Canada and uniting our vast land and have been the subject of many debates in this House. Transportation legislation then must be founded on a social and economic objective. In this case the social objective must be that of maintaining transportation services on an equitable basis for all parts of our country. Nowhere is the importance of this more clearly evident than in the north.

In Yukon, my home riding, a territory of some 200,000 square miles, we are accessed by one major highway and only one major Canadian airline since the amalgamation of PWA and CP. The cost of living in Yukon is at least 20 per cent to 50 per cent higher than in most parts of southern Canada. Much of the reason for this is the high cost of bringing goods to the territory, most of which are trucked in a minimum of 1,000 miles from the south.