

National Transportation Act, 1986

was that Canada would come to grips with the challenge of transportation and would solve it. No one knew what kind of engineering or financial investment would be required to lay railway tracks from the Atlantic to the Pacific, but they committed themselves to doing it. Canadians were inspired by that. The residents of British North America in this area were inspired by that to build a great country.

There is no doubt that when people look at a problem outside of any market considerations—and transportation policy was looked at outside market considerations—many inefficiencies can be built into it. Over the years we have seen a lot of inefficiency. We have seen some efforts to try to limit the inefficiencies, to try to develop a system which would work like a market and would have some of the discipline of the market even though its fundamental orientation was developed without any consideration of the market at all.

● (1140)

But we are now facing an ideology that really is against the philosophy which built the transportation system of the country, the ideology of deregulation that in the same way, as in 1867, was chosen to ignore the market-place because the goal was to try to build a great country. Today the ideology is the opposite, the ultimate solution being the market-place, and that all of the problems perceived to exist in our transportation system will be eliminated and resolved by a little bit of market discipline.

When you ask average Canadians what deregulation means, some will talk about the bureaucracy. They say we are in favour of deregulation because there are too many bureaucrats in the system, too many decisions being made in too many power centres and the market solution, deregulation, will clean all that out. Some say that, but most people in my experience have two things in mind when they talk about deregulation and say they are in favour of it. First is lower prices. Canadians who favour deregulation are largely under the impression that if deregulation comes into force it will mean that air fares, train fares, bus fares and the cost of shipping freight will go down. They are in favour of deregulation, not because they object to the bureaucracies that are implied by regulation but because they believe having deregulation will mean lower prices.

Second, I believe most Canadians favour deregulation because they think it will give them more choice. They say if we have deregulation then carriers denied access to our home town or our factory to carry our goods or to carry our families will now be able to do so and will not be stuck with just the CNR or Air Canada. These two goals, lower prices and more choice, are what I think most Canadians understand deregulation to mean. When this package is delivered, if it does not give Canadians lower prices and more choice, then I do not think the kind of support out there for deregulation will continue.

Where did the idea come from that deregulation means lower prices and more choice? As you yourself know, Mr.

Speaker, they come from the United States where the experience of deregulation has given those results, not to all Americans, but to a lot of Americans. They found that prices went down and that they had more choice. But, that is not an inevitable result of deregulation. When you look at Canada you see that our country is made up of a huge land mass with small population centres spread throughout it and large population centres clustered along the United States border, and you begin to see the wisdom of the commitment of the Fathers of Confederation and of those who put Canada together in the first place. Transportation is not something you can leave to the market-place if you want to hold the country together and if you want to keep Canadians in contact with their frontier. The sense that all Canadians have that the frontier is available to them in all the different senses of that term is a very important reason that Canadians feel such a strong commitment to their country. Transportation is a big part of it. Deregulation can threaten it.

I want to now look, and I know we do not have much time, at several of the specific provisions of the Bill and explain my concern to you, Mr. Speaker. The Government was asked for commitments as it was putting this program forward, that there would be lower costs as a result and, in the fine print and in the lower key features of the Government's presentation, it has admitted that air fares are already at the level they would be with deregulation. It is not very likely that the introduction of deregulation will result in lower airfares. Why will there be increased service and more choice? Again, there is no commitment at all that there will be increased service and more choice.

The one area that has to concern all Canadians is the question of safety. We know that the Government is not proposing to deregulate safety, although the logic of deregulation should probably lead you to that, but it is another reason that we are so cautious about deregulation as a subject. In the area of safety, unlike the area of fares or route approval where deregulation is to come, we are maintaining regulation, but having deregulation will put pressure on safety. That has been the experience in the United States where deregulation has been under way for a few years already and where we have seen a number of accidents. Some of the factors of those accidents include pressures that result from the market-place working on carriers, and on the membership of unions who make the system work. These kinds of pressures from cost cutting and cost consciousness have had an impact on safety. We in this Party are concerned about that, and we do not think the Government has shown enough sensitivity to it.

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to participate in this debate on Bill C-18 because I have been listening to the Government's arguments on why we should support it. I am sure that Members in this House and those who have watched the House on TV recognize that this whole concept of deregulation and the panacea that deregulation brings had its genesis with the Liberal Party when it was in Government from 1980 to 1984. In fact, the Liberals started