

jobs which could be lost in the transport industry if the government blindly proceeded with total deregulation. Some statistics which I find indisputable were given by Canadian unions which appeared before the Committee on Transport and which told us explicitly that to copy the Americans as this Tory government wants to do in the deregulation of transport would have in Canada the same results as the deregulation of transport has had in the United States, that is the loss of many jobs in that industry. However, the government has been entirely relentless as far as those representations were concerned.

The government could have also consulted, Mr. Speaker, all aviation professionals, pilots and others, who appeared before the Committee on Transport and clearly told us that deregulation would inevitably lead to reduced service and what is more important, reduced safety. We are not imagining those things, this is what those experts, the pilots who earn their living in that field and are the first ones on the line told us: "Take care, what has been done in the United States resulted in decreased air safety." Now the present Minister of Transport as well as the former one told us time and time again that everything would be done to maintain total safety. At one point, the Prime Minister even said that we were going to be number one on safety. We were going to make sure we would have the best safety record. However, if we take a closer look and analyze what the Government has done, we realize that these were just empty promises. We have nothing in our legislation to protect safety standards, and as for the Department of Transport and the various agencies that would be created to monitor Canada's new transportation system, they do not have the person-years and will therefore be unable to provide for the necessary resources to monitor and enforce the most important safety standards.

• (1910)

Only yesterday, when we were considering the report stage of this Bill, we tried to amend the legislation to ensure that the most important safety standards would be enshrined in the text of the Bill. However, the Government would not accept our amendment.

So we have nothing tangible here at all. When the Government talks about safety, it is just talk, since no concrete action has been taken in this respect.

Furthermore, the Government should have listened to our Canadian railway companies when they told us that Bill C-18 constituted a threat to their survival. The railway companies, both CN and CP, testified before our Committee and told us that the new constraints imposed by Bill C-18 would be a threat to their survival, lead to a substantial drop in revenue and business, and force them to cut back severely their operations across the country.

The Government was unmoved by these representations. In fact, it preferred to impose time frames that were entirely unrealistic. For instance, when the Transport Committee was to study the White Paper *Freedom to Move*, we were handed

the document and told to submit our report within two months. We would be able to hear a number of witnesses, but the report had to be tabled in Parliament before Christmas. Next, when we got the Bill, we were told the Bill had to be reported back to the House before Easter and that it was all very urgent.

Mr. Speaker, I may remind the House that the last time the legislation was revised, a Royal Commission of Inquiry sat for three years before any changes were made in the National Transportation Act.

In fact, in addition to the very short time frames, the Government even had the gall to impose time allocation on consideration of the report stage, and we are now limited to a maximum of four hours at third reading. I think this is hardly the way to deal with a sector that is one of the most important components of our economy. And I think it is hardly acceptable and entirely inappropriate to make such radical changes in the legislation that regulates transportation in this country.

Gagging the Opposition may be something the Government can afford to do in the circumstances because of its crushing majority, but although the Government may be able to gag us here, although it may be able to force Parliament's hand to pass this legislation, it cannot gag the general public. It cannot gag the workers in the transportation industry who will be affected by this Bill. It cannot gag the transport companies whose activities will be seriously disrupted by this new legislation. I am convinced that within a very short while, we of the Official Opposition will have to repair the damage done by this Government which has set its mind on forcing us to adopt a bad piece of legislation much too quickly. I have no hesitation in predicting that, within two or three years at the most, the Government will have to deal with a new Bill to correct the harmful impact of Bill C-18 on our transport industry.

We of the Liberal Party are vigorously opposed to many of the provisions contained in this Bill as we believe that they will seriously harm the economy of Canada for several years. We regret that this Bill does not contain the provisions required to provide such things as serious and credible safety standards for air travellers; adequate services for handicapped travellers; measures to protect jobs in the transport industry; and guarantees that the national transportation network will remain the cornerstone of regional development in Canada.

In a few words, those are the major points on which we of the Official Opposition have tried to suggest improvements, and I am thinking especially of my college, the Hon. Member for Westmorland—Kent (Mr. Robichaud) who has proposed several amendments. We have not been as successful as we had hoped.

We believe that the review of such a blue-print legislation, which is essential to the socio-economic balance of this country, deserves a much more responsible approach than that taken by the Conservative Government. I emphasize that, in such a major review, much more care should have been taken