

*Motor Vehicle Transport Act, 1986*

ago, but I firmly believe that the national safety code will not be ready by January 1, 1988 when deregulation takes effect.

As you would know, the Committee on Transport held public hearings throughout Canada, and a number of interest groups took this opportunity to urge us not to proceed with highway transport deregulation until such time as a national safety code has been put in place. These people also sought the assurance that the national safety code would be standard from coast to coast, not a checkerboard code but a code which would be similarly applied throughout the country. If I may, as an example I will quote the Atlantic Provinces Trucking Association which represents the interests of the 300-member trucking industry in the four Atlantic provinces. Here is what they had to say, and I quote:

[English]

While the original concerns and/or opportunities presented in the initial brief remain valid today for the most part, the APTA would like to point out that members are still uncertain as to the impact of the various proposed changes. Varying interpretations are being given by federal and provincial officials in such key areas as the timing and enforcement of the new National Safety Code as well as the uniformity of the regulations themselves.

Truckers in the Atlantic provinces are faced with a minimum of five different interpretations of other areas such as the meaning and intent of the "reverse onus" test in enabling a gradual reform phase and commitments to review the impact of the same on the structure of the trucking industry.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, Members of the House would be interested to know that the APTA's mandate is to promote the well-being of the trucking industry in the Atlantic region. Their views are extremely important, and I should think the Minister would indeed be well advised to take them into account. APTA spokesmen also cautioned the committee Members that the impact of deregulation might be quite different in the Atlantic region as compared with the rest of the country. Again I quote:

● (1700)

[English]

"The APTA would also like to point out that regulatory reform in the trucking industry may have a different impact on carriers in the Atlantic provinces compared to other parts of Canada. It is our understanding that many provinces across Canada may continue to regulate intra-provincial freight movements as they have in the past, while adopting freer regulations for interprovincial freight movements. Given the smaller size of the intra-provincial freight markets in the Atlantic region, concern has been expressed as to whether or not present provincial and regional carriers will be able to survive in such an environment".

The above comments apply particularly to the three Maritime provinces which are the three smallest provinces in Canada. Should the scenario be that the National Safety Code regulations and their enforcement not be uniform, and the "reverse onus" tests be interpreted differently in the three Maritime provinces, then considerable havoc could result in trucking operations.

[Translation]

It was also noted that APTA officials did insist on the fact that rail rates had to compensate. They felt strongly that Bill C-18 did not provide adequate guarantees, but that Bill has now passed the third reading stage.

Mr. Speaker, I must point out that the concerns of APTA have not been allayed.

With respect to the national safety code, I should like to read a letter written by Trucking Association President Raymond R. Cope and recently published in newspapers. This rather enlightening article is entitled "Deregulation Safety Threat to Truckers, and I quote:

[English]

Deregulation safety threat to truckers.

Transport Minister John C. Crosbie's letter (June 10) suggesting that the implementation timetable for the new National Safety Code is consistent with safe trucking in Canada is totally misleading. The facts are these:

With the passage of Bill C-19, the extra-provincial trucking industry within Canada will be effectively deregulated as of January 1, 1988. Economic regulation of the trucking industry in Canada has in the past provided barriers that have prevented many unsafe trucking operators from acquiring operating authority. Thus, economic regulation has had a safety regulation by-product.

With the elimination of economic regulation, the only barriers to irresponsible trucking operations will be those laws and regulations which are brought into being across Canada to implement the new National Safety Code.

The minister of transport has indicated that the National Safety Code is to be phased in between 1988 and 1990 and that the main elements of the code will likely be in place by January, 1989. This will mean that for the period January 1, 1988 to January 1, 1989, there will be inadequate safeguards to irresponsible and unsafe trucking operations.

As a result, the accident rate in Canada will be higher than it otherwise would be with correspondingly higher numbers of injuries and fatalities.

The deregulation experience in Australia and in the United States has clearly established the need to have a proper safety net in place before the onset of deregulation.

It is essential that the Government of Canada take immediate steps to synchronize the timing of the effective implementation of the National Safety Code and the phase-out of economic deregulation.

[Translation]

And it is signed by Raymond R. Cope, President, Ontario Trucking Association.

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, the Canadian trucking industry is far from being satisfied with Bill C-19. And what about the Canadian people who are quite concerned about the increase in trucking traffic on our highways. Already, we are well aware that the deregulation experience in the United States trucking industry has resulted in a considerable increase in the number of highway accidents.

We, on the Standing Committee on Transport, have been warned by several experts that a similar situation could develop in Canada if a national safety code is not put in place at the same time as deregulation. It is unfortunate for all Canadians, but the Government just will not listen, preferring to risk the lives of Canadians, which is altogether unacceptable.

We, of the Liberal Party, would prefer not to see this bill implemented before the national safety code is in place. We should listen to the officials of the trucking industry. We feel it would be wise to take into account the American experience and to set in place first a national safety code.

To conclude my remarks on highway security, Mr. Speaker, I should like to read a letter with a June date which was sent