

*National Transportation Act, 1986*

to ensure that when service whether by truck, rail or air, begins in a particular community or area, it will be there for some years to come so that the local community can build its businesses and infrastructure based on the certain knowledge that the transportation service will continue.

I noticed with some interest that the Hon. Member for Western Arctic (Mr. Nickerson) talked about the great value of deregulation and permitting companies to come and go at will in providing service to communities. He can take that position quite secure in the knowledge that his area of the country, the far north, will continue to be regulated so that those communities will know for some time that they will have transportation service available and will not be subjected to the kind of on-again off-again service the smaller communities in my part of the country, the prairies, will find themselves facing.

The only criteria for a company beginning a transportation service to a community is that it prove—and apparently this can be done fairly easily—that it is fit, willing and able to provide a service to that community and it will, with very little to-do, commence the service. On the surface that sounds like the ultimate in free enterprise and good business for small communities. However, most of the communities I represent, and in which I have lived all my life, know that that sort of philosophy does not pan out when one starts getting into cases. The community of Wishart has lost its rail line because it was unable to maintain the interest of the shipper. Under this law, that phasing out process which took three or four years, during which time the community was provided with service, will no longer be available. The service can be withdrawn very quickly by a number of processes, some of which only take 60 days, so that if a railway or trucking company think they are not making enough money providing goods and services in and out of a town like Wishart, they can be gone in 60 days. Under the regulated system, at least the community had an opportunity to go before a branch of the Canadian Transport Commission and argue its case for maintaining the service as long as possible.

We have another process at work with the dropping of the old regulation which required that public convenience and necessity be the basis upon which service was supplied to small communities. That is the move which was made possible under the changes to the Western Grain Transportation Act when it was piloted through this House by the previous Government under the then Minister of Transport, the Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Fort Garry (Mr. Axworthy). These changes permitted a procedure whereby some of the railways could offer to their customers variable rates. This is beginning to be seen in western Canada for what it is worth. It appears to be an opportunity for the grain companies and railways to coalesce and provide a minimum amount of delivery points so that producers have only a few points at which to deliver grain. They propose to use the variable rate procedure as a means whereby higher prices for the final grain product will be offered to producers to deliver to certain designated points.

Those higher prices are made possible because the railways have offered a reduced rate to the shipping company. One of the railways states these variable rates are in fact economical for it because it can drop off more cars to these larger points and make fewer stops. Making drop-offs of 10, 20 or 30 cars, reduces its operating costs and, therefore, it can pass the savings on to its customers.

I want to raise the question, Mr. Speaker, that if the railways are finding it costs less and is more convenient to drop off 10, 20 or 30 cars on a siding for a customer, why can they not offer those kinds of rate cuts to the Wheat Board which is, in practice, the actual shipper of the biggest chunk of the grain in western Canada? The Wheat Board allocates the cars and arranges for them to be unloaded, a trainload at a time, at the individual terminal, regardless of who the prior shipper was, and the corrections for the ownership of pool grain, UGG grain or pioneer grain, is taken care of simply by trading paper between terminals. If the railways are arguing they have less cost by dropping off 10, 20 or 30 cars to a shipping point, I would argue that by allowing the Wheat Board to be seen as the shipper, the cars could be loaded faster because they could call on all of the loading capacity of all of the companies at that shipping point to make the load. The unloading is already being done at one terminal and the ownership question is corrected afterward.

• (1240)

I think that some of the arguments being used in proceeding with some of these so-called initiatives do not make sense. Where they do have some economic impact, they are not put into place with the desired rationality. For instance, they do not recognize that the Wheat Board is the major shipper of grains. They do not consider the Wheat Board a shipper because the grain transportation agency has decided it will not permit the Wheat Board to be a shipper, even though the practice and the law states very clearly that it is.

I think all Members of the House and the general public will be opposed to this move by the Government to end regulation, as it calls it, simply because it will effectively end the feasibility and economic viability of a great many small communities in my part of the country, as well as in other parts of the country.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Richard Grisé (Chambly):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in today's debate on Bill C-18, an Act respecting national transportation, because transport is a major tool to promote business expansion in the riding of Chambly and, of course, the economic development of the entire Montreal region, including the south shore of Montreal. I am pleased as well to join in this debate and share whatever transportation experience I have had over more than twenty years, especially with respect to road transportation in Quebec.

I heard Members of the Liberal Party and our NDP friends say that Canadians will be deprived of certain services as a result of this measure. I should think it will be the other way