

*Government Orders*

that there is safety in groups. When you break away from the main body, your bargaining powers are limited and safety is sometimes set aside for the sake of operating the business. We cannot allow that to happen.

For a moment I would like to go back to the future—no pun intended, and I am not referring to the movie either—and remind hon. members on the other side that if Bill C-5 is passed, it would in effect allow the Canadian Western Railway Company to disengage itself from the provisions included in Bill C-105, an act that was passed in May 1988 to ensure the safe operation of railways and to amend certain other acts in consequence thereof. That is exactly what I was referring to a few moments ago.

Bill C-105 ensures that the Governor in Council may make regulations respecting engineering standards governing the construction or alteration of railway works and such engineering standards may embrace both physical specifications and performance standards.

It also ensures many other safety measures and states in a section devoted to acts applicable to Canadian government railways that:

Notwithstanding anything in the government Railway Act or any other act of Parliament, the provisions of the National Transportation Act, 1987, of the Railway Act, other than sections 156 to 184, and of the Railway Safety Act, in so far as those provisions relate to the construction, maintenance and operation of a railway, apply in respect of any Canadian government railway that would but for the passing of this Act, be subject to the government Railway Act, but only for the period during which the management and operation of that railway is entrusted to the national company.

In other words, once the company is declared outside of federal jurisdiction it does not have to conform to the act. Is the current Minister of Transport in the mood to allow different legislation to apply on a provincial level to various railroads, and in the matter of safety, no less? This concerns safety not only for the workers on these freight trains but for those who have to travel over railway crossings.

It seems to me that this government is intent on washing its hands of a whole lot of issues. The government would rather leave workers twisting in the wind when it comes to bearing the brunt of regressive taxes such as the GST. It would sacrifice Canadian workers on the altar of the mighty American dollar when it comes to

free trade. Just after it put the lives of train workers on the line with cuts to VIA, the government wants to continue this trend for freight trains and jeopardize the livelihoods of these workers as well by washing its hands of the whole business.

I share the concerns of the United Transportation Union when it states:

We strongly oppose the principle that federal regulation of railways, including matters of safety as well as labour relations, could be avoided by the transferring of a part or parts of a national railway to a provincially incorporated company. We consider this prospect to have serious consequences for the future of railways in Canada. We are completely at a loss to understand why Parliament should be promoting this prospect.

Frankly, so am I. I have yet to hear any arguments from the other side as to the rationale behind this. Maybe I have an idea about what this bill is all about. It is that the federal government would rather wash its hands of the whole thing. It intends to get rid of all the trains and leave it to private industry altogether.

I would just like to touch on the financial aspect of these abandoned lines for a moment. When we consider the amount of money in Canadian tax dollars that the government has spent over the years to build our national rail lines, we see that the amounts are phenomenal.

We are now in a position where our freight trains are giving us a return on that investment, yet we see this government abandoning lines and allowing them to be picked up for next to nothing with interest-free government loans. It is allowing them to go to private enterprise which is now showing a profit three times that of the government's.

When I see this I kind of wonder just what kind of management there is by the government when it comes to railroads. If a private company can do it, why cannot the national railways do it? Why are we abandoning these lines when they are in fact profitable, when they could and do return a profit, and when that profit could be returned to Canadian people, people who have invested in this company?

I just wonder what the government's response would be to such a question, a question as to why it is so willing to abandon these lines when they are profitable. My colleague from the other side has argued that Bill C-5