

*Adjournment Debate***PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT
MOTION**

[Translation]

SUBJECT MATTER OF QUESTIONS TO BE DEBATED

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 66, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: The Hon. Member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia)—Food—Irradiation with cobalt-60. (b) Scientists' reservations—Safety of practice; the Hon. Member for York-East (Mr. Redway)—Environmental Affairs—Introduction of legislation announced in Speech from the Throne; the Hon. Member for Swift Current—Maple Creek (Mr. Wilson)—Agriculture—Fuel tax rebate—Denial to farmers using vehicles on highways. (b) Request for reconsideration of rebate.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION ACT, 1986

MEASURE TO ENACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Crosbie that Bill C-18, an Act respecting national transportation, be read the second time and referred to a legislative committee, and the amendment of Mr. Benjamin (p. 2756).

Mr. Keith Penner (Cochrane—Superior): Mr. Speaker, my brief contribution to the debate on Bill C-18 will focus on one aspect only, that is, how this legislation will affect—and in many people's minds affect adversely—regional economic development.

It was concern for regional development which first led me quite a number of years ago to consider standing for a constituency and coming to represent an underdeveloped region of the country here in the federal Parliament of Canada in the House of Commons. During that period of time there have been a large number of endeavours to come to grips with the serious problems of regional development in northern Ontario. They have met varying degrees of success. Some attempts have been almost negligible in terms of their effect on the North, and some have had a reasonable amount of measurable positive benefit. However, always standing in the way of effective regional development in northern Ontario has been the transportation problem. It would be much more serious than it is today if we did not have at least some degree of regulation. Very often, it was the regulatory agency which prevented corporations such as Canadian National, for example, from abandoning the region almost entirely. Despite regulation CN has still managed to do rather well in its obvious neglect of this vast resource region that has contributed so much to our federal union.

What is very puzzling about Bill C-18 is that it recognizes in passing that transportation is important to regional development. In Clause 3 of the Bill there is a passing reference to transportation being recognized as a key to regional economic development. However, that is about as far as it goes. Well-informed citizens in the constituency which I represent who see the correlation between development in transportation and development in the region believe that this legislation will act in a contrary way. In other words, instead of assisting and ensuring that development will go forth with transportation as a tool, it will work in a negative way.

● (1600)

I would argue that in Bill C-18 we need much more than a passing reference to the fact that transportation is a key to regional development. We need a policy that is translated into legislation which will ensure that transportation can become a key to regional development.

Since the Government took office, I have become sadly aware that regional development has been de-emphasized. Federal programs for regional development have either disappeared, or the amount of funding to support those programs has declined. What has taken the place of the programs with some muscle has been a proliferation of committees to consider what can be done. In fact, in recent months committees have become the biggest growth industry in northern Ontario. All types of committees are looking at what can be done to get around the fact that our region is in a state of rapid decline.

Although deregulation may have a large benefit for the country in increasing commercial viability and in increasing competition, it cannot be argued by anyone that there will not be certain beneficiaries from deregulation. Never would I stand in my place and argue that we want a totally regulated and controlled society. I am arguing that a certain number of safeguards have to be put in place for regions that are now underserved, and regions that are blocked from further development because the transportation facilities are not there. This type of emphasis on national competition and commercial viability will push these regions further into the background. They will find themselves much further away from achieving any equity with the rest of the country.

I have listened to a number of speeches from the Opposition, and I am sure that some Hon. Members in the House will say that here is the Opposition once again either whining or creating concerns that are not legitimate. When we express our concerns about how this legislation will affect regional development, we have some strong supporters. Not only opposition Members, but Premiers of many provinces have looked at the legislation along with their advisers and have come to precisely the same conclusion. These concerns have been translated into a number of resolutions put forward by the Premiers gathered together in conference. For example, as recently as November, 1985, when the Premiers met in Halifax, they looked at legislation brought forward by the