

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION ACT, 1986

MEASURE TO ENACT

The House resumed from Friday, January 30, 1987, 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),

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The Hon. Member for Vancouver East (Ms. Mitchell) did have the floor for the 10-minute question or comment period. However, since she is not here, we must go to the next person.

I would like to remind Hon. Members that under Standing Order 55(2) we have completed the eight hours of debate. We are now into 10-minute speeches. I must recognize the next speaker from the other Party. The Hon. Member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke (Mr. Hopkins).

Mr. Len Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Mr. Speaker, I have not yet had the opportunity in the resumption of this Parliament to congratulate you on your job as Deputy Chairman of Committees of the Whole. You conduct yourself very well in the chair and we wish you every success in that role.

I am pleased to rise today to speak on Bill C-18 which deals with the National Transportation Act. It also deals, of course, with the deregulation of the transportation industry. Bill C-18 is primarily designed to revamp the National Transportation Act brought forward in 1967 by the Hon. Jack Pickersgill who was then Minister of Transport in the Government of the Right Hon. Lester B. Pearson. I can remember very well as a fledgling Member in those days sitting behind Mr. Pickersgill while he supported his Bill day after day.

I recall having a Parliamentary Secretary come to my riding to speak one night. In those days, of course, the House sat at night, and the House was still in session. While the Parliamentary Secretary and myself were in my riding, a snap vote took place. I was paired, but, unfortunately, the Parliamentary Secretary was not. The Government lost that vote, I believe, by 57 to 55. It was one of those squeakers. When Bill C-18 came up for debate it brought back those old memories. Jack Pickersgill was a very adept and professional Parliamentarian, as we all know.

The cited purpose of this Bill is to increase competition in the transportation sector by removing certain regulations which hinder the ability to compete. That is very serious for the regions of this country. It is certainly one reason I wanted to speak on this Bill on Friday and today. The transportation modes which will be affected by this deregulation are rail, air and trucking. Of course, most of us have received representations from them all.

National Transportation Act, 1986

Every Canadian rail company, commercial airline, private airline owner, extra-provincial trucking firm and parcel carrier will be affected by this Bill in the way they will be allowed to conduct their business. It will be particularly difficult on regional airlines. Again, regional airlines are very important to the regions of this country because they feed passengers and freight into central locations.

Of course, there is something about which we have to be very cautious, and it is one of the major thrusts of this debate. The fact is that in the deregulation of the transportation industry one must always talk about ensuring that safety measures are implemented. We are not absolutely certain that the proper precautions have been taken with respect to the implementation of this legislation.

• (1120)

I remind the House today, and all Canadians, of the Gander air crash in which Arrow Airlines transporting a planeload of American troops home from peace-keeping operations in the Middle East did not use every safety precaution. As a result there was a crash in which many people on their way home for Christmas lost their lives.

This is a serious matter in spite of the fact that the Parliamentary Secretary gets up after each speech and reiterates how the safety measures of the Bill will be implemented and how everything will be fine when they are in place. What will be needed to oversee the transportation industry once all deregulation efforts go into effect is a police force doing nothing else but supervising deregulation and the way in which people treat it.

We have to go one extra step in Canada, something which we have known since Confederation and even before. I refer to the equalization of transportation costs to all parts of the country. The issue is deeper than that, however. It goes to placing transportation facilities at the service of various regions of the country.

I was absolutely astounded to learn what will happen under deregulation. I have received a great many representations from van lines, people who ship by rail, trucking firms and, of course, regional airlines. The Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) went down to the United States and said that Canada is open for business. It has been said often in conjunction with that statement that we are not up for sale. Yet, when we see what has happened recently in Canada, for example, the 15 per cent tax on softwood lumber, the fishing agreement with France which has devastated the fishermen of the East Coast and now the transportation industry situation, we may very well have large American companies coming in to buy up smaller Canadian firms. These firms will not be absolutely perfect in putting into effect all the safety measures.

Let us deal with one measure of deregulation. There is one thing that the transportation Bill of 1967 did, that is, it ensured a reasonable and fair transportation policy for the regions of Canada. Recently, the CNR came out with what it