

National Transportation Act, 1986

scene. I refer specifically to the absence of any provisions to prevent major foreign takeovers of Canadian transportation companies and routes. The U.S. has a 25 per cent limit on foreign ownership of transportation companies. What do we have in this legislation? The Bill has no provision to limit foreign takeovers of Canadian transportation companies. The only guideline is the fact that all mergers and takeovers over \$20 million and 10 per cent of the voting shares of any Canadian transportation firm will be reviewed by the Governor in Council. That does not mean they will set it aside or refuse it. All they will do is review. The only other proviso says that all those below those ceilings will be reviewed in the normal procedure by Investment Canada. It seems to me that in a country as large as Canada, as sparsely populated and with communities dependent either on rail, air or road for the links which keep the country together, it is folly to consider passing a Bill which would permit foreign takeovers of all our transportation companies with no guarantee that the control of our system will remain in Canadian hands.

That does not surprise us in the Opposition because this has been the hallmark of the Conservative Government. A little bit of pressure from France, and the Conservatives sell off our cod stock. A little bit of pressure from the U.S., and they sell off our softwood lumber industry. Are we going to be foolish enough to pass this Bill in its present form, a massive piece of legislation, without providing any guarantees that our railways, which have linked this country from coast to coast and provided the basis for our history, our airlines and our trucking routes as well, have absolutely no Canadian majority ownership? Are we going to see CN or CP sold to the U.S. or foreign multinationals in the same way we saw de Havilland sold to Boeing?

By making some positive amendments to this legislation we have a chance to ensure that Canadian ownership of our transportation industry remains intact. I suggest that this is a critical amendment. It would in some measure allay the fears of those who really do not trust the Conservative Government to protect the interests of Canada when it gets the slightest pressure from outside. Our interests seem to take second place to France or the U.S.

It is totally unacceptable that in this Bill we are willing to put our rail, air and trucking routes up for grabs to the highest bidder. Those bidders may not act in the best interests of our regions. They may not act in the best interests of our consumers. They may not act in the best interests of Canada.

Many Canadians settled from coast to coast as a result of the development of our national railway. It seems to me that in one fell swoop in this Bill, unless we include certain amendments to provide protection against massive foreign takeovers, the national dream that Canada is linked from coast to coast could very easily be sold south of the border. That would simply be another note in the saga of Investment Canada. We cannot allow that, and I think most of us in the Opposition agree that the concerns expressed last week by the rail workers

in Belleville or the airline workers at Air Canada are legitimate and valid concerns which must be addressed before we move forward with any wholesale change. It could inhibit not only the protection of jobs but could also inhibit the survival of our very nation, given the transportation infrastructure we have depended upon in the past.

• (1750)

Mr. Kilgour: Mr. Speaker, I find it very difficult to understand the position of the Liberal Party on this Bill. Would the Member who just spoke be kind enough to tell us what the position of her Party is? Is it or is it not in favour of it in principle?

Ms. Copps: The current Bill stinks. Is that clear enough?

Mr. Kilgour: Does she know that the Combines Investigation Act and Investment Canada remain in force? The existing legislation does not prevent foreign acquisitions. Could the Member tell the House where she is coming from? Is she opposed to everything in the Bill? What, if anything, does she approve of in the Bill? I do not expect her to speak for her Party. Has she read the Bill?

Ms. Copps: Mr. Speaker, with regard to where I come from, I would be facetious if I said that I come from my mother's womb, so I will not. I will say, instead, that I come from Hamilton East.

With regard to the Bill, it is clear that we have outlined major concerns and reservations. In its current form the Bill is completely unacceptable because it contains no guarantees against foreign takeover of our transportation systems. The Member claims to be knowledgeable about this Bill and I am surprised that he is not aware that there are only two conditions in this legislation which govern potential takeovers.

The first condition is that all mergers and takeovers over \$20 million and over 10 per cent of the voting shares will be reviewed by the Governor in Council. The second is the normal provisions set out by Investment Canada. I am not surprised that the Member originally referred to that agency as the Foreign Investment Review Agency. He is so out of touch that he does not realize that the first thing his Government did two years ago was to denude completely and take the teeth out of the Foreign Investment Review Agency and replace it with Investment Canada, which we prefer to refer to as "divestment Canada" because it offers no protection to Canadian companies but rather opens us up to takeovers by foreign corporations with very little concern for the Canadian sovereignty which we in the Liberal Party would like to protect.

Mr. Benjamin: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Hon. Member's remarks. I hope I am right that the Liberal Party has changed its mind as it is obvious that Government Members have. A former Liberal Minister of Transport, Otto Lang, started all of this. When the present Member for Winnipeg—Fort Garry (Mr. Axworthy) was the Minister of Transport and proposed deregulation, the present Government