

It was only a few weeks ago that we witnessed the death of one of Canada's great traditions. I am speaking about the end of The Canadian. We have heard reports that a private group wanted to take over this route but at a price that few, if any, Canadians would be able to afford, especially if you tag on the GST—and God knows at what per cent it will be by then—to the price of the ticket.

I wonder if my colleague on the other side who spoke on this matter will be able to keep a straight face when he tells the workers at CN that deregulation, privatization and a deeper concern for the bottom line are to their benefit. I bet he would not be able to say that to all the laid off workers from VIA Rail.

CN employees are probably feeling pretty nervous right now wondering if they are going to be next. I wonder about a lot of workers along the rail lines who would be feeling nervous when we consider all the changes that are taking place these days to UI as a result of the free trade agreement and the changes to our tax structure when we talk about the GST. There are many things going on in this country that introduce a sense of nervousness for just about all of us.

When the bill was introduced in April of last year the United Transportation Union sent a letter to Minister of Transport expressing its concerns. It points out in this letter some background information that I would like to quote for the record:

The United Transportation Union represents train and yard service personnel on the Canadian National Railway (CNR). The CNR sold a portion of its line (approximately 106 miles in south central Alberta) to the CWRC, a provincially incorporated company in November of 1986. The United Transportation Union and other unions, brought certain applications against the CNR and the CWRC to the Canada Labour Relations Board to preserve our bargaining rights and the jobs of our members. A critical issue was whether labour relations on the CWRC fell under federal or provincial control.

• (1020)

The Canada Labour Relations Board, in a decision dated February 27, 1987, held that the CWRC was a federal work, undertaking or business. The CWRC appealed that decision to the Federal Court of Appeal. The appeal was dismissed on January 28, 1988. The CWRC has now appealed these decisions to the Su-

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preme Court of Canada. I must point out that that decision has not been handed down as yet. It is pending.

I would like to quote something from the bill under the heading "Continuation of Existing Corporations":

3. The company incorporated under the name of Canadian National Railway Company by an act to incorporate Canadian National Railway Company and respecting Canadian National Railways, chapter 13 of the Statutes of Canada, 1919, the company formed by the amalgamation of Canadian National Railway Company and The Grand Trunk Railway Company of Canada, and the Canadian National Railway Company referred to in The Canadian National-Canadian Pacific Act, 1933, chapter 33 of the Statutes of Canada, 1932-33, are hereby declared to be and to have been one and the same company, and the said company is hereby continued under the name of Canadian National Railway Company.

The purpose of reading this part of the bill is to indicate that in 1919 the government of the day saw fit to incorporate and nationalize our railroads. Today, we see a government which is somewhat insensitive to our national system. It seems to be quite content with the beginning of dismantling not only our passenger rail service but now it is headed toward dismantling our freight rail system.

Quite frankly, I find that appalling. I reiterate what I said earlier. With all the changes that are taking place in our country we see that now the government is supporting a bill that in essence allows for the dismantling of our national institution, the railroad. The very fibre that joined this country is now being dismantled. That is only one of the reasons I am opposing this bill.

I quote further from the letter to which I referred from the labour group which states:

We oppose any legislation to benefit one company, particularly where the matter is pending before the court.

I happen to share that opinion.

I would like now to introduce a bit of history to these proceedings and to read some remarks made in December 1986 by the then Minister of Transport, the hon. member for St. John's West, on the motion for second reading of Bill C-18, an act respecting national transportation:

As Minister of Transport, my responsibility, in addition to providing an efficient transportation system, is to provide a safe one. Our first priority will always be safety.

When we speak of safety and we talk about separating branch lines, abandoned lines if you will, from the main line and not allowing them to be part of the federal unit for the purposes of the protection of the workers, we are just tearing the whole system apart. It just seems to me