

National Transportation Act, 1986

legislation would have an impact on employment, and this is one example of how certain regions will be affected. I would like to mention one particular weakness in this Bill, and I am not the only one to do so, and that is the absence of a clause ensuring that regional development will take precedence over profits. Mr. Speaker, we believe it is absolutely essential that the new National Transportation Act contain a reserve clause reflecting the essential role played by transport in regional development.

I would also like to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to bring the following to your attention.

[English]

"Following a meeting in Fredericton, the Premiers of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island denounced the proposed National Transportation Act, saying it would further the economic gap between central Canada and eastern Canada.

The Premiers want Transport Minister, John Crosbie, who tabled the proposed legislation in early November, to add a clause ensuring that regional development will take precedence over a profitable transportation service when the two conflict".

[Translation]

And I would also like to bring to your attention, Mr. Speaker, a letter I received from the Chairman of the Premiers Council, which says basically what I said just now, and I quote:

Since the new Act does not guarantee that in case of a conflict, regional economic development objectives will take precedence over requirements that transport services should be a profitable concern, we cannot give it our support.

"We" means the provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

We believe it should contain a clause that would subordinate the concern for commercial viability to regional economic development objectives. The federal Government's reluctance so far to include such a clause is particularly worrisome when we consider the negative impact Bill C-18 will have on transport services in the Maritime provinces.

We have written to the Hon. John Crosbie about this question and would like discuss the matter with him very soon. We hope that you support our position. Yours very truly.

Even after pressure from the provincial Premiers, the Minister's reaction was certainly not favourable.

I now want to refer to a meeting of the Transport Committee where the Minister himself said that he did not really share the views of the Premiers of the three Maritime provinces who wanted to include in the legislation a provision that in every case would allow one situation to take precedence over another. The Minister of Transport has refused to meet this request by the Maritime Premiers who are genuinely concerned about the threat to their region's economy.

We can say that in its present form, the Bill does not allow for any regional considerations, not even with respect to remote areas.

Mr. Speaker, regulation has helped us deal with a number of problems connected with regional economic development. It is

unfortunate that the Minister would rather not include a clause to that effect.

If deregulation paves the way for a highly competitive market, we simply must provide some kind of protection against the loss of services.

Mr. Speaker, such shortsightedness brings Bill C-75 to mind—I will conclude shortly—Bill C-75 which had to do with Canada's merchant marine and whose clause 4 had been the target of witnesses who appeared before the committee. Sure enough, Government Members were not prepared to listen to the objections of the witnesses right until Bill C-75 died on the Order Paper at the end of the previous session, even after a speech of nearly seven hours delivered by my colleague from Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe (Mr. Tobin).

Eventually Government Members rose to voice their opposition to clause 4, so the Minister of Transport agreed to re-introduce the Bill, but without clause 4. Naturally we are pleased that the Minister finally came to his senses in the case of Bill C-75. Mr. Speaker, we hope the Minister will see the light, though it may take him some time, but we will give him all the time he needs because we are going to debate this measure for quite a while yet.

● (1650)

[English]

Mr. Lesick: Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Hon. Member for Westmorland—Kent (Mr. Robichaud) with great interest. I wish to make several comments and then I will ask him a question. There seemed to be a stressing of profitability, profitability, profitability in his speech. Yet one of the best companies we have in Canada is a private company which has been trying to make money for these many years, that is, Wardair. It is a highly successful company located in Edmonton. It has spread its wings throughout much of the world and is now going across Canada. My first flight on Wardair was 22 years ago. It has been a very safe airline with an enviable record.

I suggest there should be less stress on profitability and more stress on what the airline actually does. There has been a suggestion that the Government has been deaf to representations following the release of the *Freedom to Move* policy and that attempts to shape and improve the policy were ignored. That is far from the truth. This legislation has been developed in a co-operative effort with the private sector, carriers, shippers, users and communities. More than 500 groups and individuals made representations during this consultative program to which we have listened. The standing committee has listened to the people across the country. In addition, the House, through the Standing Committee on Transport, had a very definite impact on the shape of this legislation. Members of the standing committee include all Hon. Members of the House. The committee had two separate sets of hearings, one hearing on the over-all policy and another focusing on the northern and remote areas of the country. The recommendations were taken to heart and were included in the legislation.