

*National Transportation Act, 1986*

This legislation should be thrown out on one ground alone. There is absolutely nothing in it to guarantee the safety not only of airline passengers but also the protection of regions from reductions in service routes, rail line abandonments and other eventualities. There is the question of safety of passengers and there is also the question of job security.

The reason the Air Canada situation in Toronto is so disturbing can be understood after reading statements made by Mr. Claude Taylor and Mr. Pierre Jeannot in the December 15 issue of the Air Canada employee newsletter. These gentlemen say that they hope they can look back with gentle pride on the hope and caring that members of the Air Canada family have given to many people. According to Mr. Taylor, he is proud of the work employees have done with crippled and sick children, men and women needing temporary homes, young people seeking help for drug or alcohol abuse, and agencies that provide food and clothing for the less fortunate. He is speaking of the Air Canada family.

The Air Canada family includes machinists who are now faced with never, ever getting another weekend off without giving in to the company's demands to give up statutory holidays. Why does the Canada Labour Code designate statutory holidays if companies will subsequently tell their employees that they can never have days off unless they give up their rights under the Canada Labour Code? It is a fraud which I have already brought to the attention of the Minister of Labour (Mr. Cadieux). I hope to get a positive response from him. However, I think it relates to this particular debate as well because it is a harbinger of what we may expect after the rail and trucking deregulation which will occur if we accept Bill C-18 in its current form.

I would like to take a few moments to examine the situation of rail employees. In the last week, I had a visit from a group of rail employees from the great City of Belleville. One of these employees had a long history of rail involvement. His father was a railroader, his grandfather was a railroader and he was a railroader. I sympathized with him because my grandfather was also a railroader.

This group showed me figures relating to the repair shop in Belleville showing that from January 1 to October 31 of 1986, the number one car equipment repair shop in the Great Lakes region was the shop in Belleville. That shop was number one in October and September. At the same time as this operation has shown CN that it is viable, economic and is doing the best job of about a dozen shops operating in the Great Lakes region, it is being closed down. These employees have been given their notices and have been told that they can either move to Toronto or another area or quit their jobs. In many cases, these employees have several years of service and are well established in the community of Belleville. They do not want to be put in the position of having to move to Toronto, Fort Erie, Niagara Falls, Sarnia, Capreol, Cochrane or Hornepayne simply because they have to save their jobs. They want to stay in Belleville and were led to believe that if they performed as an efficient operation their site would be saved.

However, on January 9, 1987, CN laid off 47 workers in Belleville. Those same workers had several meetings with the local Member and were under the impression as late as the latter part of last year that there would not be lay-offs and they would not lose their jobs because they were productive and operational.

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Belleville is a microcosm of what we see happening in Moncton. It does not matter if you are able to justify your existence. It does not matter that I have here a document which shows that the Belleville operation was the most effective and efficient shop for the repair of CN cars in the whole of the Great Lakes region. For Canadian National and the Conservative Government the emphasis on quality and productivity has given way to political considerations.

One reason this Bill in its current form is not supportable is that there is absolutely no guarantee for the many regions. Perhaps Belleville is not as big as Toronto. Perhaps it does not have the political clout some other communities might have. We are only talking about 47 employees here, but they have made their home and their life and put down roots in Belleville. Now they have been abandoned.

In this Bill there is absolutely no guarantee for the workers who have been dealt a dirty blow by CN as a result of this closure, nor is there a guarantee which will protect regions like Belleville and eastern Ontario from reductions in service, routes, and rail line abandonment. At the same time there are no guarantees for passengers.

It seems to me that when you are dealing with a country the size of Canada you have to address the sensitive issue of rail line abandonment. Certainly the Conservative Government, when it was in opposition, made much political hay out of the abandonment of certain responsibilities at VIA Rail. We have to be extremely sensitive that any legislation seeking to amend in a major way national transportation routes has something to protect the regions. It is not surprising there is no such condition in this legislation because I think that over the last two and a half years the Conservatives have demonstrated quite clearly that they are not interested in regional enhancement. They are not interested in ensuring that not only the far-reaching and isolated areas of our country are served by rail, road and air, but so are even the smaller community in provinces like Ontario, communities like Belleville. They are not interested in making sure that a well-operated, functional and effective shop remains open. Their policy is centralization and to give it all to the big at the expense of the lesser areas and regions.

Over the last couple of days we have seen the fishery dispute which we will hear about in an emergency debate tonight. Not only are the Conservatives prepared to sacrifice the regions for the larger centres, they are also prepared to sacrifice Canada when it comes to the interests of other countries, whether it be the U.S. or France. Again in this legislation we see they are not prepared to protect Canadian interests on the international