

National Transportation Act, 1987

In 1896, people seeking gold came over the Chilkoot Pass. One of my famous predecessors in the House of Commons, Martha Louise Black, was one of those who went over the Chilkoot Pass in 1896. In 1935, she became a Member of Parliament for the Yukon.

Despite the Yukon perhaps being somewhat isolated from the rest of Canada, it has certainly led the way in electing women, and now of course, in electing New Democrats.

The men and women of Yukon today, like their counterparts in the south, are really average working people who value independence and self-sufficiency. They value the lifestyle of the north and want to stay there even with the high cost of living and harsh living conditions.

We are concerned about the potential for loss of jobs through this legislation. Even the loss of a few jobs has an extremely significant impact on the economy. I think this is probably quite true in other areas of Canada as well, particularly in rural areas.

Deregulation does not meet the transport needs of this country. It will not further economic diversity. Canada's public policy has not historically been based on the survival of the fittest mentality, but rather to strengthen Canada from sea to sea to sea by encouraging a fair deal, not just for the many but for the few as well. I submit that this legislation will not do this. I urge the Government to implement a public policy that will be fair and equitable for all Canadians.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

• (1240)

Mr. Thacker: Mr. Speaker, I am sure all Hon. Members will join together in commending the Hon. Member for a fine maiden speech in the House of commons.

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, I would also like to congratulate the new Member for a thoughtful speech which not only well represented her riding but certainly addressed the inconsistencies of the Bill. I would like to indicate that, as the Chief Whip of her caucus, she will be called upon to give many more speeches on behalf of the New Democratic Party. I think one could say that finally the velcro has been stripped from the lips of the Yukon.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to raise a question or make a comment. As whip of the Liberal Party, I should like to indicate simply that we have fully appreciated the comments made by the Hon. Member and that we are delighted to have her with us.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, I want to join with my colleagues in congratulating the Hon. Member for Yukon (Ms. McLaughlin) for what was indeed a very fine speech. As one who some time ago had a large interest in this Bill, and spent a lot of time in committee when it was first introduced, going back to the White Paper, I must say that the Hon. Member for Yukon has summarized very eloquently and succinctly the problems which confront

those Canadians who live in the more far-flung reaches of the country, those people who are dependent in a very fundamental way on transportation services. Transportation services do not come at them in a flood of varieties but they are restricted usually to one or two basic services. The Hon. Member, I think, has done the House a service, having only been here a short while, in reflecting very well the concerns of her constituents.

Coming from Newfoundland, I share those concerns. I have to say as one who has been associate transport critic for some period of time, and who was in on the ground floor when the White Paper was released by the Minister initially, and as one who travelled the country with the committee listening to Canadians from across this land, that many voices out there were not saying that deregulation was of and by itself some kind of disaster for Canada. They were saying that while we need to reregulate, to make changes to our transportation system to help it be more competitive and able to evolve in changing conditions and times, we have to maintain at the same time some measure of ability on the part of Government and regulatory agencies to ensure the best interests of Canadians.

As one who has heard that kind of testimony given by quite sincere witnesses right across the country, people who crossed all political ideologies, I am amazed that today we have a Bill before us which came back to the House with nothing more than some housekeeping, house cleaning amendments. These are technical changes to ensure that the French and English sections correspond with each other in as exact a language as possible. These are minor changes.

In making those minor changes, what kind of substantive testimony by Canadians has been ignored? That has been done in a number of fundamental areas. This Bill would change the basic nature of what was formally known as the Canadian Transport Commission which is a regulatory agency that has operated at arm's length from government since the 1960s. It is an agency which is not a Liberal agency, nor a Tory agency, nor an NDP agency. It is a group of some of Canada's finest and most committed citizens appointed to act as the agents of the people of Canada, not of a particular political philosophy. The CTC is an agency which, in the past, functioned as an echo and voice for the people of Canada, including those who live in areas such as the north. Its mandate, in acting in that capacity, was to sensitize and recommend to the Government of Canada the kind of changes necessary from time to time in transportation policy to reflect the reality of this country. It is an independent agency.

That agency has been wiped out. It is gone with the stroke of a pen. It exists no more. There is a new concept incorporated in this Bill. Rather than being independent, autonomous, recommending transportation policy to the Minister honestly without fear of losing a job, and so on, this new agency will receive policy instructions from the Government of the day.