

*National Transportation Act, 1986*

that since it assumed power in 1984, and here we have another obvious example.

A regulatory reform package, or deregulatory reform package, is like any other program. There are sectors and individuals and regions who may benefit and those who may suffer. All the speakers I have heard from the government side have talked about the benefits of the Bill, and only the speakers on this side of the House have said, "Sure, but there are costs and issues which are not being addressed". I am disappointed when my friend, the Hon. Member for Mississauga South, for whom I have great respect on some matters, stands up and spouts a lot of drivel about freedom and freedom to move and so on. He knows better than anyone else that a tax program, or any other program for that matter, has costs and benefits. He is the first one in committee to sort them out, but not here. Here he is toeing the Party line.

There are some old sayings that our friends on the other side of the House should pay attention to, some old adages like look before you leap. Another one with which we are all familiar is: do not throw out the baby with the bath water. It seems to me that this Act we have in front of us, this voluminous effort at deregulation, underlines the wisdom of those wise sayings which have been developed over many centuries.

In some respects I suppose one might say that this Bill speaks quite eloquently to the very fundamental difference between a Conservative and a Liberal Government. As I said at the outset, we favoured regulatory reform, and I speak with some knowledge because I had responsibility for regulatory reform. However, we were not speaking of deregulation; we were speaking of better regulation. Sometimes that means a decrease in regulation, sometimes it can even mean an increase in regulation, especially when it deals with the safety and health of the public. However, the Hon. Member seems to suggest that a regulation is some kind of evil. I say to him that if he thinks that, he should never be in Government because it is the Government's duty and obligation to bring forward sensible regulation where the costs and benefits to the various sectors of society have been properly analysed. That is the Liberal approach, but not the Conservative approach. All we hear is freedom and deregulation. That would be like throwing out all the quotas on how many fish you can take out of the lakes. I am sure the Hon. Member would not support that kind of legislation, but that is the way he talks. Everybody should be free, the common property should be there for everyone. If all the fish are gone and all the deer destroyed, so what. That is freedom. Those sectors have to be regulated, and they are, and that is what his job and the job of his Government is.

It is terribly important in this sector that we not get carried away with this ideological thrust and forget that pragmatic common sense must underline this legislation as it does all other legislation. It again reminds me a little bit of the ideological thrust toward privatization. Sure, we had a privatization approach as well. It was a difficult period to privatize companies, but there was no ideology saying, "do not privatize".

**Mr. Kilgour:** You just did not do anything.

**Mr. Johnston:** That happens to be wrong and I can prove it to the Hon. Member but, that being said, we did not privatize for ideological reasons, or intended to privatize, I should say, in most cases—

**Mr. Blenkarn:** What did you ever privatize?

**Mr. Johnston:** Yet here we have this thrust to privatize at any cost. Some Crown corporations work well and some do not. However, the issue of deregulation is not one of ideology, it is a pragmatic, common sense approach.

I will just make a few other points because you seem to be indicating my time will soon expire, Mr. Speaker. What we have in this Bill is an ideological leaping before you look, leaping, I suggest, into a swamp of alligators for many sectors of the economy, and that gives me great concern. Let me just give you a few examples. There is no question that this will create an integrated free trade zone and save trucking costs both north and south of the border. One thing I cannot understand—and it has nothing to do with the merits or demerits of negotiating a free trade agreement—is why we, along with FIRA, the NEP and everything else, would simply give this away and not make it part of the free trade negotiations if they are going to be carried on. It is a mystery to me. Of course, the whole conduct of the free trade negotiations is shrouded in mystery, and hopefully some day we may learn that they are not as incompetent as they appear to be. However, this seems to me to be just bungling along, once more giving away unnecessarily a chip which could be used to much greater advantage.

If we are going to try to integrate the transportation structures of Canada and the U.S. what about the level playing field? The Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) has now deferred his tax reform Bill. How on earth can you talk about putting these kinds of measures in effect without knowing what the tax regime is going to be north and south of the border?

You are looking somewhat impatient, Mr. Speaker. I thought I had 30 seconds to go. In any event, I want to make one specific point. As we know, the United States carriers have a major depreciation advantage on heavy equipment. They can write the equipment off over three years, whereas we are looking at seven or eight years. Will that change?

• (1650)

What will be the income of the business transfer tax on Canadian carriers as opposed to that of the Americans? I suggest the Government is moving with undue haste, without having prepared the ground work or knowing where it is going. That is why I find the notion of deregulation particularly offensive. The Government wants to move full speed ahead, damn the torpedoes. There are many torpedoes out there and they will start hitting our fleet soon.