

National Transportation Act, 1986

to find other means of transportation. Of course, Air Canada offered to take us back to Moncton, but three hours later.

So, Madam Speaker, this is what happens when competition and market forces have a free hand—everything goes when it comes to cost-cutting too often at the expense of service to the people.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Madam Speaker, I have a few comments on Bill C-18 and the amendment put forward by the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin).

● (1720)

[English]

His amendment is one that would eliminate the sentence: "Competition and market forces are, whenever possible, the prime agents in providing viable and effective transportation services". We should give that serious consideration because when a Bill deals with competition and market forces being the prime motivators in terms of transportation in this country, it builds into the system a clause that will discriminate against many regions of this country, including small communities, rural Canada, and other parts of Canada that are a long way from the market.

I want to use a specific example in my riding to show why I am concerned. In my riding we are beginning to see the effects of the rationalization of the railways, CNR and CPR.

Melville is a rail centre for the CNR and always has been. There are approximately 600 or 700 jobs with CN in the City of Melville, which has a population of about 5,000 people.

Approximately two months ago, the CNR announced that as of the end of June it would lay off some 46 employees. There are now rumours that another 14 will be laid off by Christmas, for a total of 60 lay-offs.

I want to say to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Crosbie) that last Thursday in Melville, the City of Melville, the trade union, and the Chamber of Commerce organized a rally at the Melville stadium. There were 1,200 people at the Melville stadium protesting the rationalization of CNR and the loss of 46 jobs to that community, the loss of many families in that community. I was pleased to be there with the provincial Minister of Labour, who is the MLA for Melville, with Mayor Don Abel of the City of Melville, who is also the President of the Saskatchewan Urban Municipal Association, with Peter Champagne who was one of the workers, who, with many other people, represent the community very well. The people at that rally were concerned about deregulation in general and particularly about the specific fall-out in the City of Melville.

By eliminating 46 jobs in a small city like Melville, the Minister is taking a real piece of the community. The spokesperson for the Chamber of Commerce explained how these lay-offs would affect business very negatively. These lay-offs take a large chunk from the schools because many of the men

being laid off have children going to school. These people are being taken away from their families and friends.

There were 1,200 people protesting at the stadium in a small place like Melville, when game 6 of the NHL finals was being played and one of the Philadelphia Flyers, Brian Propp, was a junior hockey star in that very Melville arena. Despite the fact that the game was on television and people were following the play-offs closely, 1,200 of them showed up at the stadium. I think that should indicate to the Minister of Transport that people in Melville are concerned and want him to intervene with the CNR and use his influence as Minister of Transport to see whether he can ensure that those jobs do not end on June 30.

● (1730)

I appeal to the Minister to do that. The Mayor of Melville is in town today. I know Mayor Don Abel would like to see the Minister of Transport. I know other people in the City of Melville would like to see the Minister of Transport. The provincial MLA, who is the Minister of Labour and a Conservative Member, would like to talk with the Minister of Transport. All of us collectively are urging him to do what he can to persuade the CNR to keep those jobs in the City of Melville.

Another thing happened in Melville last Thursday night. We were there as invited guests. After all the guests came on to the platform, there were two empty chairs remaining. Those empty chairs were for the head of the CNR and the Saskatchewan member on the Board of Directors of the CNR. Both of them were invited. Neither of them even had the courtesy to telephone—

An Hon. Member: Is this relevant?

Mr. Nystrom:—the organizational committee of the City of Melville to say that they would not come. They did not send a letter, a telegram, or anything at all. I suggest that this is a very human, personal, particular example of deregulation of transportation, where we have the rationalization plan of CN affecting Melville, one of the cities in my riding, in a very real and pertinent way.

That kind of thing will be repeated time and time again across the country if the Government has its way in terms of deregulation of transportation in Canada, be it airlines or other modes of transportation.

It is only one example. I could give other examples in my riding. A few moments ago the Hon. Member for Lethbridge—Foothills (Mr. Thacker) said that I was not being too relevant to the Bill. I think I am being extremely relevant. I should like to give another example in my riding of how deregulation affects ordinary people in small towns and villages when we have deregulation, when we have a plan where the railways are forced to rationalize.

An Hon. Member: Abolition.