

will automatically concentrate on the biggest and most lucrative markets, and who can blame them? In other words, peripheral regions and remote areas in Canada's North will have fewer services and fewer opportunities for economic expansion.

[English]

Because my time is limited at this particular juncture of the debate I am just going to touch briefly on a couple of other issues. There is a very real concern that the legislation could have an adverse impact on the disabled. I was a member of the Special Committee on Equality Rights which recommended that the Canadian Transport Commission enforce tough new regulations to ensure accessibility for the disabled to all federally-regulated modes of transportation. This legislation will move back from that important objective. As well, it could have a particularly adverse impact on my Province of British Columbia. The Government has already conceded that regulation is necessary in areas above the 55th parallel. What about the other isolated areas below the 55th parallel? Why does the Government equate Cranbrook with Toronto instead of other areas, for example, north of the 55th parallel? We recently saw Air Canada close its ticket counter in Victoria. We have to ask ourselves what would happen in a deregulated British Columbia.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, this Bill ignores the Canadian situation. It makes no allowances for our geography, for our scattered population centres or the rigours of our climate, and it ignores our sovereignty and independence. This Bill wants to hand us over to the invisible forces of the free market, while everybody knows perfectly well these forces will have a very serious and even disastrous impact on the transportation sector across Canada.

[English]

For that reason, we in the NDP will do everything we can to prevent the Government from moving ahead with such a destructive piece of legislation. It not only has an adverse impact on transportation but could directly and vitally impact on the nature and character of this great country. The transportation sector is essential. We must not allow the Government to continue with the steps taken by the Liberals in an attempt to destroy it.

Mr. J. R. Ellis (Prince Edward—Hastings): Mr. Speaker, I do not see any other speakers rising, and I want to deal briefly with the Bill. In my remarks I want to deal directly with the amendment as printed in the Order Paper:

Bill C-18, An Act respecting national transportation, be not now read a second time but that the Order be discharged, the Bill withdrawn and the subject-matter thereof referred to the Standing Committee on Transport.

Indeed, I intend to go a step further because, while no one even remotely suggests this amendment might pass, I am of the opinion that an attempt might be made to have the Bill referred to the Standing Committee on Transport instead of a legislative committee.

National Transportation Act, 1986

I was a member of the Special Committee on the Reform of the House of Commons, better known as the McGrath committee. I can tell you that the recommendations having to do with legislative committees were carefully reasoned after a great deal of study, and in my opinion, at least, legislative committees to date have been working extremely well. In addition, standing committees with their new-found freedom have also, in my opinion, been working well.

I recently read in the press where the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Transport is reported to have said that his committee was breaking new ground when it dealt with the Port Authority. That is the role of the standing committees. The challenge for standing committees is immense. The possibilities for them are enormous. Why then refer this piece of legislation to a standing committee and break the new rules which have been working so well?

● (1210)

As is done in the normal course of events, there was a chairman appointed according to the new rules when the Bill was first introduced in the House. I am that chairman. While I do not particularly want to chair this Bill for my own sake, I do want it to go to a legislative committee. I have recently been given the job of chairing the legislative committee on Bill C-37 and that may keep me busy for a little while. I have, however, spent the last 14 years involved in the Transport Committee, sitting on it primarily when it was dealing with matters of air and rail, less frequently when it dealt with matters of water transport.

The clerk for the legislative committee on Bill C-18 was appointed at exactly the same time as I. The clerk who was chosen is one of the most knowledgeable in the field of transport. The clerk and I met and jointly requested a researcher who is equally well versed in this field. The researcher has been working steadily since November on the subject matter, preparing material for me as chairman in readiness for the Bill going to committee.

Since the matter is spelled out by the Clerk at the Table each day in the Orders of the Day as follows, "Resuming debate on the motion of the Minister of Transport—That Bill C-18, an Act respecting national transportation, be now read a second time and referred to a legislative committee", there has necessarily been a great deal of correspondence between persons who want to appear before the committee and myself. All of this correspondence has been answered and a list has been prepared.

Although this may be of no major significance, I, as chairman, have discussed the matter with the chairman of the comparable committee in the European Parliament which is dealing with the deregulation of transport. They are now making arrangements to come to Canada, at their expense, to discuss these very important matters on a joint basis with us.

The powers of the legislative committee are set out very clearly in Section 93(8)(a) which says that a legislative