

National Transportation Act, 1986

would assist Canadian Pacific among others, could he respond to the concerns expressed by Canadian Pacific that the legislation, as currently tabled, may have exactly the opposite effect to what was supposed to be the case?

Mr. Kilgour: Mr. Speaker, with respect, obviously the Hon. Member was not listening to my speech or I misdelivered something. I certainly did not mean to suggest that it would benefit CP.

I worked on a steel gang for CP and on a section gang for CN, so I know the railways from the rail up. The object of the exercise is partly to ensure that the two railways stop exploiting, with a capital E, shippers in any part of the country including urban centres.

Since the Hon. Member was obviously not listening to my speech, I guess there is not much point in repeating it now. Presumably she would not listen if I repeated the portions of my speech which dealt with that.

Ms. Copps: He is avoiding my question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The time for questions and comments has expired. Resuming debate with the Hon. Member for Hamilton East.

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, obviously the Hon. Member avoided the question. He did not answer the specific question concerning Canadian Pacific and how the legislation will do the exact opposite to what it is supposed to do. I am sure the Hon. Member would be very happy to answer the question at another time, as opposed to skating and obfuscating.

● (1730)

Nonetheless, at this time I would like to look at this legislation in the light of what it will mean to the average Canadian worker. I am sure there are workers from the rail, airline and trucking industries watching this debate with much interest because they would like to know how it will directly affect their jobs.

In the past couple of weeks, I have had a chance to meet with both airline and rail employees. They have asked me to express in the House of Commons their concern over the difficulties that have already been faced by airline employees because of deregulation and over the difficulties which are currently facing workers in the rail industry. I wish to refer to two specific cases.

There is a major Canadian airport in the City of Toronto. Last week, I had the opportunity of meeting with a number of employees who are extremely frustrated by the attitude of their employer which is attempting in its own way to deal with deregulation on the backs of employees. I refer specifically to Air Canada. I have in my hand a petition signed by several hundred Toronto Air Canada employees who are extremely concerned about the company's attempt to deny workers basic human rights not only under Article 12 of the 1985-87

collective agreement between Air Canada and the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers but also basic human rights under the Canada Labour Code which permits employees to enjoy statutory holidays. Air Canada is attempting to blackmail its employees into giving up statutory holidays by designing a shift system which is so unconscionable that more than two-thirds of all employees employed in the machinists' section at the airport in Toronto will never, ever have a weekend off as of the beginning of this year.

There are 294 employees at the ramp and hangar at the Toronto airport. Under the new scheduling process, only 34 per cent of these workers will have Saturdays and Sundays off. Sixty-six per cent of the employees will never have a weekend off. The reason for this is that the company has made it quite clear to the union that even though this particular scheduling system is not the most effective and efficient one, the company wants its employees to give up their rights to statutory holidays in return for getting some weekends off.

The reason I raise this problem in the context of this massive piece of legislation is that with the introduction of deregulation in airlines, we have had a chance to look at what will happen in the transportation industry. Some of us might be cynical and say: "Well, too bad, these employees should never have weekends off". However, even the Canadian travelling public must admit that the morale of employees is extremely important.

When I met with these workers last week, they revealed to me that the situation in Toronto is getting so desperate that there are in fact breaches of safety. Mechanics at the airport are working on airplanes on which they should not be working specifically because management is telling them that even though they may have up-to-date licences to work on 727s, they will work on DC8s. They must do this even though they have not had the upgrading required for those who have not worked on a particular airplane for three years.

I further heard from these same employees their concern about safety checks on individual planes. These are being done on a rushed basis. Normally, an hour and a half is set aside for an individual safety check. These employees told me that in some cases, mechanics are required to certify three, four or five airplanes in the time it would normally have taken before deregulation to examine one airplane. The Government's claim that safety is not being compromised is rubbish.

In examining the American experience, one finds that the first thing that went after deregulation was safety. In 1979, the American Federal Aviation Administration had 2,000 inspectors monitoring 237 air carriers. In 1984, after the United States embarked on its program of airline deregulation, it had 1,300 inspectors for 407 air carriers, an increase of 70 per cent in the number of air carriers travelling the airways and a decrease of 700 inspectors. This massive cut was made at a time when we were being promised that safety would not be compromised.