

Motor Vehicle Transport Act, 1986

I would now like to refer to the remarks of the Parliamentary Secretary as reported at page 3153 of *Hansard*. He stated:

The Bill also provides for further federal-provincial agreements, including the definition of the fitness test and a uniform national safety code.

He went on to state:

—I believe we have learned a great deal from the U.S. experience with the deregulation of the trucking industry. We have looked at what has worked well, what has not, and considered the profound differences between the two countries. We now have a truly made-in-Canada policy for our trucking industry.

He goes on in his remarks to illustrate how we have become sensitive to the need for the economic deregulation of trucking, to be followed by a reform of safety regulations, which was the American way. He stated:

—we intend to do quite the opposite because we believe that safety of the transportation system is the number one priority of truckers and all Canadians. The Minister has stated this on many occasions. Consequently, a uniform national safety code has been developed and approved in consultation with the provinces and the trucking industry. This code will be the cornerstone of the new fitness test. The other elements of that test will be insurance and bonding requirements.

I find the Hon. Member's remarks extremely interesting.

[*Translation*]

I received a letter from Executive Vice President Jacques Alary of the Trucking Association of Quebec Inc. in which he tells me:

Mrs. Finestone:

Federal Minister of Transport John Crosbie met with his provincial colleagues in Toronto last October 2. The purpose of their meeting was to decide the future of transport regulations. Our provincial Minister of Transport, Mr. Marc-Yvan Côté, understood and defended the approach recommended by the Trucking Association of Quebec in this case. It is to shun deregulation unless a coherent policy has been implemented and includes:

1. An enforced and enforceable standard highway safety code—

[*English*]

The letter is dated October 9, 1986, and there is still not a national security system or code in operation.

I would now ask Hon. Members to consider a meeting which took place during the week of February 6, 1987, in Victoria. This was a meeting of the Safety Committee of the provinces. It is interesting to note that the provinces seem to be all over the lot with respect to what the costs will be in terms of implementing a national safety code. Most of them do not wish to become involved with the regulations concerning hours of work which are intimately related to safety. If one drives 22 hours a day and sleeps only two hours, one cannot be a safe driver the next day. There is no uniform national vehicle inspection code. Hon. Members will know from the use of their own cars how important it is to maintain a vehicle.

What is not understood by the Government is that there has been a verbal commitment to a national safety code but no action has been taken. Ottawa has little juridical clout which it can use because this matter falls into an area of joint jurisdiction. Until a national safety code is in place it is reprehensible to even consider moving into this area.

• (1540)

I have a copy of an interesting study conducted by Dr. Glaskowsky on the effects of deregulation of motor carriers in the United States. This gentleman is a Professor of Management and Logistics at the School of Business Administration, University of Miami. He has much to say about safety, and I wish to mention a couple of his concerns.

On page 29 of his book he describes what the trucking industry is all about. For the listeners out there, many of us do not appreciate the type of life that truckers face, and the type of stress under which they live. It is not only the small individual trucks that are seen in your ridings in major cities or in small towns, we are also talking about national transportation, and major truckers. My grandchildren used to say, "Gee, grandmother, how many wheels has that one got?" The life of that trucker is very difficult. He is on the road away from home most of the time. There are women who are driving trucks these days. Drivers have to handle a 40 ton tractor-trailer rig in all types of traffic, weather, and roads. Meals are catch-as-catch-can; sleeping accommodations are either "up in the box" in the sleeper cab of the truck, or in a less than plush motel bed on the highway. Over-the-road driving is a very tough life. Those who have not experienced it should be very careful in their assessment of whether the wages are just, and what type of lifestyle it is. In contrasting the life of the trucker with that of the airline pilot or the train operator, the truckers' lives are very difficult.

It may be interesting to take a further look at the situation of safety deterioration as a result of the potential deregulation and increased competition in this field. There is trouble with regard to safety.

Over-the-road tractors in heavy use are driven about 2,000 miles a week, or 100,000 miles a year. In the history of this industry they have a life expectancy of about five years, with a major engine overhaul at the end of three years, giving them an additional life of two years or 200,000 miles operating life. At that point they are generally junked. The "junk it or use it" choice for aging large diesel tractors is today a Hobson's choice with respect to many carriers. Depending on the model, a new over-the-road tractor today costs over \$80,000 U.S. That is a large investment. If some spare tires are thrown in, and you have a few trucks, this comes close to a million dollars. A motor carrier strapped for cash in an intensely competitive deregulated milieu or environment, looks for alternatives and ways to cut corners. That is not in our interest. If there are no national safety standards in place, we will have a great deal of trouble.

Pressures are growing for tighter and tighter administration, inspection, and enforcement of safety regulations in the United States. The Parliamentary Secretary who read from notes from the Department of Transport said that they had learned from the American experience. I would suggest that he go back and look more closely at what is the American experience. Inspection and enforcement is costly. It will certainly cost millions of dollars to have the type of skilled inspectors we