

National Transportation Act, 1986

downgrading of safety, maintenance and security, and that safety will not be compromised. While safety pays, it also costs money and reduces the bottom line, particularly if companies are forced to cut one another's throats by reducing the cost of freight rates or airline tickets.

That is the worst kind of risk management because it not only places transporters at risk, more important, it places the employees and the public at risk.

No sector in the transportation industry in Canada for the last 150 years, whether private or public, has been able to start up and continue functioning without public funding for the infrastructure and capital.

I suggest that no private airline would be operating in this country if it were not for the public purse. Last year, the deficit on airports was almost \$700 million because the public provides the navigational and meteorological aids, the airports, the fire-fighting and rescue services. The airlines would be unable to function if they had to provide such services.

An Hon. Member: That is the same in all modes.

Mr. Benjamin: Exactly. All of them are and continue to be subsidized. Those who believe that these industries can operate in a deregulated free market regime with minimal regulations and be able to provide the same quality of service to Canadians are dreaming in technicolour.

Canada has always attempted to find mechanisms which try to equalize as much as possible the delivery of transportation service no matter where one lives. There is still too much discrimination against people because of where they live, where they produce or manufacture their goods. I would be a fool to invest \$100 million in a manufacturing plant in the Prairies, in Atlantic Canada, or up North rather than near Toronto, Montreal or Vancouver. This legislation is designed to inhibit regional and economic growth.

The railroads have already indicated the length of line they want to remove, and even want to remove a thousand miles of tracks in the Laurentian Division, mostly in the Ottawa Valley from North Bay to Montreal. I suspect that CN wants to do this in order to force the Government into buying the track and giving it to VIA Rail, thereby relieving Canadian National of the responsibility.

It wants to get rid of all the track in Prince Edward Island and would like to eliminate the Newfoundland Railway if a deal can be made with Newfoundland. However, that railway comes under the 49 Articles of Confederation with Newfoundland. Yet the railway is in jeopardy if a deal can be made to remove the tracks and build some roads in Newfoundland.

We are scheduled to lose not less than 3,000 more miles of track in the prairie provinces.

Air Canada has already pulled out of six or seven cities. Today, I read the application by Air Canada to pull out of Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. Before Pacific Western Airlines took over Canadian Pacific, it pulled out of eight locations in

northern British Columbia and Manitoba. These are the areas taken over by the jerk water fly-by-nighters who do not even have mechanics or the proper equipment.

An Hon. Member: And the accidents.

Mr. Benjamin: As I indicated yesterday during debate on one of the report stage amendments, an airline operator can lose his licence and go bankrupt, while there is an airline in Schefferville in which seven passengers and a pilot were killed. That operator had no operating authority but had the licence to fly. That airline still has no operating authority, yet eight people were killed. One must wonder with this deregulation whether the Tory transportation agency would consider cancelling the licence of Air Canada or Canadian Airlines International for filing late statistics with respect to fuel consumption and the number of passengers carried. It boggles the mind.

This legislation is based on a bad principle and poor philosophy. We attempted to move 107 amendments to make this bad Bill less offensive.

It is ironic that today's paper contains a front page headline: "U.S. Airlines Reeling From Deregulation". Let us consider what is happening to the travelling public in that country. The last six times I visited the United States, I was in 12 different airports. I have yet to find a clean airport, let alone arrive on time. One never knows whether one has a reservation or must stand in a long line trying to get a boarding pass. That is deregulation. That is the Tory version of competition and the role of free market forces. American airlines cancel flights at will and feel no responsibility to the travelling public because the bottom line is its primary motive of operation. There are not enough inspectors and insufficient regulations.

The Canadian Trucking Association, which is not made up of a bunch of socialists, is pleading with the Government not to bring in deregulation of the trucking industry for at least another year. Until those national safety regulations and the safety board are in place we should not bring in deregulation. We do not have a railway safety Act or a railway safety board. The Canadian Aviation Safety Board is understaffed. It is only a year old but it is under-equipped and it cannot do the kinds of inspections it should do. But the Government wants to bring in deregulation and throw it wide open for competition. That is an invitation to disaster. It is a compelling reason for otherwise reputable transporters to cheat. It is an invitation to disaster and it will cost hundreds and hundreds of Canadian lives.

● (1830)

Mr. Gray (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder if my hon. colleague, who has travelled so extensively, both nationally and internationally, having travelled on airlines, buses, cars and whatnot, would explain why since 1978, with the beginning of economic regulatory reform, the airlines are so safe?