

amendment is in order and meets the requirements of the Justice Department.

Instead of being passed in the morning, the amendment was deferred to the afternoon sitting, when the Parliamentary Secretary came back with a new wording which was, I must admit, more attuned to some of the concerns expressed by the associations of handicapped people, although it did not go exactly as far as a legislation on transportation services accessibility standards for handicapped persons. Consequently, we were satisfied with the amendment because it was better than nothing, although the handicapped certainly expected more than that. Of course, we agreed to the amendment in the afternoon, and the Conservative Members, who felt good about it, voted in favour.

Since then, we have received a letter-

• (2040)

[English]

We have just received a letter from the Advocacy Resource Centre for the Handicapped. They said that Bill C-18 was coming back to the House for third reading and they wrote to request that we move further amendments which will permit the enactment and enforcement of accessibility standards. That is what we were ready to do in the morning. The amendment would have been accepted in the morning except at the last minute the Parliamentary Secretary saved the day for the Minister and the Government and said "do not vote immediately, wait until the afternoon". We have an amendment which has been accepted, but it is imperfect. The Advocacy Resource Centre for the Handicapped is now telling us that what we did is far short of what they were expecting. They are absolutely right.

The letter goes on to say that these standards have been under development since 1983. They are concerned that it may be many years before the Act is open again. They say now is the ideal time to make legislative provisions for standards which are nearing completion. The Minister has been informed through the chairperson of the Transportation for the Disabled Implementation Committee of its support for these amendments. They ask that we contact the Minister and indicate our support for this objective and agree to work in a co-operative fashion to develop a mutually acceptable set of amendments.

Last night, in the spirit of co-operation, I rose in the House to indicate to the Parliamentary Secretary that if he wanted to bring in the amendments referred to in this letter, we would accommodate the Government and allow it to implement the change requested. The Parliamentary Secretary said no. He refused the offer of the Liberal Party, seconded by the NDP. If the Government had wanted to do so, with the help and support of the two opposition Parties, it could have amended the Act to favour the handicapped.

They also refer to an enclosed letter to Transport Canada official Jim Miller which makes clear that these amendments were under active consideration by the Minister. The

Minister's executive assistant, and they even give his phone number, (613)-996-7501, indicated the Minister was still hoping for an all-Party agreement which would allow for this insertion prior to third reading. It said that senior officials in Transport Canada support the intent of the amendment and the Minister is known to be personally supportive.

Either the Parliamentary Secretary did not know what he was talking about last night, or the executive assistant to the Minister has misled the Advocacy Resource Centre for the Handicapped. It is one or the other. According to this letter and the Minister's executive assistant, he was ready to accept the amendment. In fact, he is supposed to have been studying these amendments since 1983. Surely they should be ready to be implemented now.

Mr. Côté (Lac-Saint-Jean): 1983?

Mr. Ouellet: Yes. We have no difficulty in saying that the Liberal Government was ready to implement in legislation amendments that would guarantee appropriate enforcement of accessible standards for the handicapped.

I do not think the Minister, the Parliamentary Secretary, or the Government have come clean with the handicapped on this issue. I think it is a shame. This is a major and regrettable flaw in the legislation and there is no doubt that the handicapped have been, to say the least, short-circuited by officials or the Minister's staff. That is not the way to treat the handicapped and I regret it very much.

• (2050)

[Translation]

To conclude, I would like to refer to the new agency created under Bill C-18 to replace the Canadian Transport Commission. It has been said and repeated time and again that this new agency will not enjoy the same authority and independence as the former CTC. The latter had an exceptional expertise and could count on conscientious and dedicated employees and commissioners who looked after the interests of transportation in Canada.

On behalf of my colleagues in the Liberal party, I want to thank all those who worked for many years at the Canadian Transport Commission and who well served their country. I must say that I deeply regret that the Government, in its desire to dismantle, to change and to rebuild everything, has decided to abolish the Canadian Transport Commission. Clearly, the Conservative Government could have made a few changes in the best interests of orderly operations at the Canadian Transport Commission. But there was absolutely no need to abolish the Commission to meet their new need for deregulation. There was a research team, an outstanding pool of expertise which could have carried on and be quite useful to the new National Transportation Agency. However the Conservatives wanted to start again from scratch, they wanted to start afresh, they wanted to do everything over again and consequently they abolished an organization which in my view