Liberal Government, at the instigation of C.D. Howe, Minister of Industry at the time, decided to create Trans-Canada Air Lines.

The reason for creating Trans-Canada Air Lines was a lack of initiative on the part of the private sector to take the risks involved in setting up a national airline. Canadians shouldered full responsibility for this undertaking.

In 1977, the Government adopted the legislation under which Air Canada is governed today. Although, there were financing problems at the time, the Government did not rush in to privatize the corporation but made the necessary changes in its corporate structure to provide for adequate financing. The present Government should do likewise.

Madam Speaker, the role of Air Canada is to operate in the interests of Canadians. The people of this country already own Air Canada. They don't have to buy it all over again. To Canadians, Air Canada is more than just another airline. It is a Canadian institution. This Bill leaves the door open to full privatization, and according to a number of polls, the majority of Canadians are opposed to the idea.

Air Canada provides a way to overcome the distances that separate Canada's various regions. Air Canada represents our Canadian community. Being subject to the Official Languages Act, Air Canada is an instrument for national unity. It is an integral part of our economy, in the same way as the railways and the CBC. It is part of that which helps Canada maintain its own identity. In the final instance, Canadians will have to pay the cost of privatization, because services and the safety of the travelling public would deteriorate, once profit becomes the sole incentive.

On January 15, 1985, the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) told the Canadian public that Air Canada was not for sale. This is just another of the hundreds of promises the Prime Minister has chosen to ignore since 1984, at the expense of the Canadian public.

The Conservatives, Madam Speaker, are dismantling the infrastructure that contributes to maintaining and holding together Canada *a mari usque ad mare*.

Let us look briefly at the effects of the privatization of British Airways, in Great Britain, by the Government of the "Iron Lady." More than 20,000 employees were laid off; that is 30 per cent of the workers of that corporation. It is quite likely that a private board of directors would decide to do the same with Air Canada's employees, which could result in 7,000 or 8,000, out of a total of 22,000, being laid off.

The safety aspect was just mentioned. Madam Speaker, I think that is extremely important. Should the company decide to cut some positions, unfortunately, it could cut heavily into the number of employees assigned to safety, so one would think. Considering the problems inherent to all transportation companies and the articles on air safety that appear regularly in newspapers, I think that it would be most unadvisable to reduce significantly the number of workers assigned to safety or to the various other departments of the airline, for that matter.

Madam Speaker, I would not like to see Air Canada become another Eastern Airlines, which has had only problems since it was taken over by Texas Air. Closer to us, in Quebec, 372 jobs, of a total of less than 2,000, have disappeared at Quebecair.

Paragraph 6(1)(c) provides for the continuance of the maintenance centres located in Winnipeg, Montreal and Toronto. However, it does not provide for the volume of operations or the number of jobs at these centres. This means that the private board of directors could reduce operations and increase lay-offs as it saw fit. The same applies for the corporate head office in Montreal. The private board of directors would in no way be restrained if it decided to transfer a large number of employees from Montreal to Toronto or even to other centres in Canada.

According to the Pilots' Association, Montreal has already lost some 50 pilots, or 10 per cent, who were shifted to Toronto or Vancouver. Their number went from 488 in 1985 to 454 in 1988. With this bill, the drain will continue.

The Montreal head office, Madam Speaker, is in danger of becoming an "empty shell" under privatization. And it is a matter of concern that, as is often pointed out, airport activity is now highly concentrated in Toronto, which is steadily taking a larger share of air traffic in Canada, to the detriment of Montreal. This statement by the President of Air Canada speaks for itself, "That is normal; Toronto is the economic centre of Canada. We have to follow the market."

My fear, Madam Speaker, and it is a big one, is not so much for the future of the head office in Montreal, but rather on what it represents in the longer term. Montreal must remain the decision-making centre for Air Canada. Unfortunately, this Bill will centralize activities in Toronto.

Also, the dense fug of the Bill is hiding the Airbus A-320 project. A deal with Airbus requires capital, and to get it, the Government is dismantling and jeopardizing a corporation which has served as the perfect tool for regional and economic development. As usual, this Tory Government has made a complete about-turn.

Before the Government can privatize part of Air Canada, the 25 million Canadian men and women who are the present shareholders should speak out.

The Right Hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) can sell a bill of goods to the Canadian public better than anybody else. During the last election, he never mentioned the privatization of Air Canada. Before selling the airline, he needs a mandate.

Madam Speaker, I am also concerned about the fact that together combination of deregulation and privatization will undoubtedly result in a mediocre service. Will Air Canada continue to serve the regions, when we know for instance that some regions are no longer served by Air Canada, because the routes apparently are no longer profitable? Studies will