

As one of the members who support the motion I believe that if Air Canada wishes to buy an airline that is its right and it should have the opportunity to do so. However, this expenditure falls into line with an investment program being undertaken by Air Canada, and I think the committee was justified in making the recommendation it did, particularly in view of the fact this money was being asked for in the form of a capital allowance which parliament was being asked to advance to Air Canada and, second, Air Canada itself admitted it was embarking on this project for which it needed money. It was also indicated that this matter had been placed before the Canadian Transport Commission and that the decision of the commission had been appealed to cabinet which was considering the matter.

Without making this recommendation I submit it would have been impossible for the committee to have approved the expenditures that were being asked for in the financing bill or it would have been a fact that part of that money was earmarked by Air Canada to be used for that purpose. It appears to me, because the decision was reached after long and detailed study of the financial expenditures of Air Canada, that it was proper for the committee to come to the conclusion that this particular expenditure, within the financial terms of the bill, was not in the best interests of Canada or of Air Canada's financing. Therefore it was suggested to the government in this report that it give consideration to the recommendation made by the members after a long and detailed study of the matter that this expenditure not become part of the expenditures to be allowed Air Canada if the financing bill were passed.

The bill is available to the House today because of the decision of the committee this morning, and it is my opinion that if the sixth report is not adopted there will be considerable reluctance on the part of most members of that committee to endorse the financing bill. Therefore I think this is a point to which the government should give consideration. I submit that it was legitimately made in the committee and therefore I believe it is a legitimate point for discussion in the House.

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Verdun): Mr. Speaker, I have just a few words to say on the matter, having been a member of the committee at that particular time. I want to say that the chairman of that committee proved to be very capable and impartial and all members of the committee appreciated it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mackasey: The fundamental point that was brought out in the committee—and I think Beaudesne, Bourinot and other authorities stress it—is that the chairman of a committee in essence acts on behalf of Mr. Speaker. The Chairman at that time had grave doubts about the acceptability of the original motion presented by the hon. member for Mississauga if I recall correctly the testimony which appears in issue No. 24 of the proceedings of the committee. It was at the request and suggestion of the chairman that the motion was reworded so as to make it acceptable in his opinion. Furthermore, he went on to point out that in effect the motion simply recommended to the government that when making a final decision on

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Wardair the government take into consideration the motion made before the appropriate committee.

The fundamental point which I should like to make is that if the chairman of every committee representing Mr. Speaker makes a decision indicating that a motion is in order only to find some weeks later that he is overruled in the House, it seems to me that we will be unintentionally undermining the position of chairmen for all future meetings and we could make committee hearings irrelevant.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mark Rose (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, I should like to speak briefly on this matter. I am a member of that committee and I was at the meeting when the motion was first put and when it was reworded on the recommendation of the chairman. Like the hon. member for Verdun (Mr. Mackasey), I am concerned about the freedom of members of committees and about the future of committees.

The difficulty that committees always face is that in order for their members to be able to discuss anything outside the narrowest of parameters they must obtain a reference from the House. What that means is permission from the minister, whether it is permission for the committee to travel or to consider certain aspects of their work. One way to make the work of committees much more successful is to give them additional freedom. I am not referring to a congressional type of committee system, but I am very concerned that if this motion is ruled out of order it will threaten the confidence that people may have in committees in the future.

I think this motion was put forward by people who tend to be philosophically opposed to public airlines. Had I been there, I would have voted against the motion. The very fact that I was not there allowed the motion to pass, and for that I am sorry. Nevertheless, it was passed and I think it is incumbent on the House to rule on the recommendation of the committee provided it is in order.

● (1430)

I assert again that the motion is in order. The bill was a financing bill having to do with Air Canada and the CNR, and certainly part of their financing involves their investment policy. I cannot understand why this has been questioned. I am opposed to the motion, but I am certainly philosophically at one with the members who have spoken here today and have suggested that, despite whether they are opposed to or in favour of the motion, the motion is in order and that it is the business of the committee to make such recommendations.

Mr. Elmer M. MacKay (Central Nova): Mr. Speaker, I think the content of the recommendation by the committee is important when you consider the implications. It in no way states or requests that the government do anything which has already been determined by the government. I think it is important to remember that all the committee is asking the government to do is to give a little input or a little consideration to the committee's request with respect to a matter that is already before cabinet and already under consideration. It does not in any respect