

Air has requested the minister's permission for access to Atlantic Canada on a number of occasions during the past two years. Competitive service is justified now between Vancouver and Halifax via Toronto. The applications have been put in for some months. What we have here, as so aptly put in a recent edition of the *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, is a case of "Too Lang a delay".

An hon. Member: Oh!

Mr. Siddon: To sum up, Mr. Speaker, we hope this House will tell the government what it thinks about its creeping socialistic takeover of private sector industries. I appeal to members on the opposite side of the House who truly believe in the principle of private enterprise to join with us today in support of this motion of non-confidence in this most incapable government.

• (1732)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Charles Lapointe (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to speak at this time. Having heard the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) and a few members of his party who spoke on the motion, I admit that we could easily be led to believe that they are arriving today from some unknown planet and that they have never opened a Canadian history book. All we heard, Mr. Speaker, are the words competition and private enterprise as if it were a cure-all, as if they did not know that Canada—the second largest country in the world—is sparsely populated and without state intervention as far as air services are concerned, hundreds of communities in our country would be without them.

I wonder, Mr. Speaker, how the Leader of the Opposition sees our country. He voices approval at Alberta's purchase of an airline, but is suddenly shocked because we have a successful national airline, Air Canada, and because the government buys a regional carrier on behalf of Canadians. Why should we be shocked, Mr. Speaker, because Canadians are the owners of air lines? In that respect I think I share the view of the leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Broadbent) who feels that we do not have to be ashamed because we have spent public funds to provide essential services for Canadians scattered throughout the country. And if we take a look at the way things are done in several other countries, be it in France, in Italy, in Germany, in Switzerland or in Australia, we can see that these countries do not hesitate to have only one national airline responsible for both domestic and international services. We can see, therefore, that we should not hesitate to do our utmost to protect Air Canada and other regional air carriers in Canada.

In his speech, the Leader of the Opposition said that it does not make any sense that national carriers should take over the regional markets; he also complained about the fact that Air Canada has flown right out of Bagotville. Mr. Speaker, I

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cannot think of a more obvious contradiction. When one of my colleagues asked him whether he thought Air Canada should abandon the service in northern Ontario, for instance North Bay, all he could say was that he did not know if it was better to maintain competition with local, regional, third- or fourth-level carriers, but as he mentioned in his speech he did not want to commit himself and say whether Air Canada or any national airline should withdraw from regional markets.

He also said in his speech that if he were to take office he would develop a whole new policy involving the utilization of the short take-off and landing aircraft. He probably took his ideas from the report published by the Department of Transport under this minister on the future utilization of the STOL aircraft between Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal and, eventually, Quebec city and Windsor. He also said in his lengthy speech in support of his motion of non-confidence in the government that once in office he would set up a policy governing chartered flights, as if he was not aware that last spring this government, at the suggestion of the Minister of Transport, set up a chartered flight policy in Canada which is most advantageous for Canadian people who want to visit their country from east to west.

Mr. Speaker, commenting on the takeover by the government of Canada of Nordair shares, the hon. member for Rimouski (Mr. Allard) said that we wanted to cut the ground from under Quebecair's feet. I think this is the most frivolous allegation made during the debate this afternoon, because we know very well that Quebecair made no offer for the purchase of Nordair when the company decided to sell.

Mr. Speaker, in light of this debate, I think it is important to have an idea of what kind of country we want. Do we think that by opening all valves on behalf of sacrosanct competition and private enterprise we shall eventually have ten or fifteen airlines, all the while applauding any province anxious to buy its own airline and forgetting the national interest, Mr. Speaker, which, I believe, should override all regional interests?

Mr. Speaker, I would like to state clearly and unequivocally that Nordair will remain a regional carrier and that, in the next twelve months, when we will be trying to find a better way of ensuring a coalition of regional carriers in the east, we will be able to maintain all air routes now served by this airline. We are trying, through this measure, to strengthen in some way the position of regional air carriers in eastern Canada. We are considering some changes at the regional as well as the national level. By strengthening the activity of regional air carriers, we are hoping to improve service as well as to increase competition between carriers. This must be achieved, Mr. Speaker, without the participation of the government and of Nordair's management and operation. What the government would want to see is some form of regional merger to improve commercial operations on a greater number of routes in eastern Canada.