

*Statements by Ministers*

jet service—is that he does not know what commercial decisions will be made in the future. What he does know is that whatever the nature of those decisions will be, the Government will no longer have the ability to interfere. The Government will no longer have the ability to intervene, to give guidance or to ensure that an airline built with the dollars of the taxpayers of Canada to serve the country from British Columbia to Newfoundland will continue to serve on that basis.

This airline will operate on the principle of the bottom line, even though the taxpayers, having built this airline over 50 years, retain a majority of the shares. That is what being half pregnant means. That is why people who attempt that kind of proposition have no credibility and cannot be taken seriously.

I say to the Deputy Prime Minister, a gentleman to whom I normally listen attentively, a gentleman who is normally a straight shooter, that his attempt to qualify the statements of the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) on the future of Air Canada, by saying that what the Prime Minister really said was that Air Canada would be sold at an appropriate moment, as we say in Newfoundland, takes all the nerve of a toothache. That would need the face of a robber's horse, and of course we know what part of the robber's horse we see when it is running away, and it is not the part that has the bit in its mouth.

To say that the Prime Minister did not make a clear statement on Air Canada is to defy the facts and the record. *The Globe and Mail* of January 15, 1985, ran a big banner headline reading: "PM says CBC, Air Canada not for sale". It did not say that the PM said that Air Canada might be for sale, may be for sale, could be for sale or shall be for sale. It said that Air Canada is not for sale.

The Deputy Prime Minister stood up today to tell the House of Commons, and through the House of Commons the people of Canada, that this is a part of the Prime Minister's master plan. I say to the Prime Minister that there really is no Santa Claus either. He will figure that out one of these days.

On January 15, 1985 the Prime Minister said that some people want to buy the CBC but the CBC is not for sale and Air Canada is not for sale. That is what the Prime Minister said. Today, we have once again discovered the value of the Prime Minister's word and the Prime Minister's favourite expression, "sacred". He says that aeroplanes are sacred instruments of travel, that the House of Commons is a sacred instrument of communication and that promises are sacred commitments to the people in the land where they live. We found out that that sacred trust is not worth the paper *The Globe and Mail* printed it on.

The Deputy Prime Minister today has come here with a policy that is in direct contradiction with the assurance that no less a person than the Prime Minister of Canada gave Canadians on the future of their national airline. That cannot be wishy-washed or shilly-shallied away by a few choice phrases on the part of the Deputy Prime Minister here today.

One wonders about competence. The Government cannot even bring in a statement today with the normal, traditional, courteous advance notice to the Opposition. It cannot even manage to avoid that kind of a crisis. That Government will now try to manage the privatization of Air Canada. That would lead one to be very worried about the Government's plan.

The Government has announced today that in the first issue of shares 45 per cent of the shares of Air Canada will be sold, with the intention being, I suppose, because it is not clear, that there will be a second share issue following which 100 per cent of the shares of Air Canada will have been sold. The Minister stands in his place, puffs out his chest and lowers his voice, much like his seat-mate to the right, the Prime Minister, does from time to time, and then he says that this means that Canadians will be able to own Air Canada. Have you ever heard such a bit of double-speak in all your life, Mr. Speaker? Who do you think owns Air Canada right now, the Shah of Iran? Canadians own Air Canada.

The Minister tells us that we have entered into an environment of deregulation, a brand new day for Canada. It reminds me of the words we heard during the last election campaign, "inflicting prosperity on the nation". In Atlantic Canada they are not calling it an infliction, they are calling it an affliction.

In this new day of deregulation, the Deputy Prime Minister says that we now have three national airlines. I like Max Ward. I think he is a dynamic fellow. I think he is going places. I think he is a great Canadian entrepreneur. I think he has done exciting things for the airline industry. However, not even Max Ward, in the middle of his fantasies between the hours of 2 a.m. and 4 a.m. prior to waking, would describe Wardair as a third national airline. That may be where he is attempting to go and, God bless him, we wish him well. We hope he gets there. However, Wardair is not a national airline. There are two national airlines. One is Canadian International and the other is Air Canada. In the deregulated environment that we have lived in for the last two and a half or three years the airline industry in Canada is more concentrated than we have ever seen it before.

• (1210)

In conclusion, let me say that this statement is obviously the first step before the Government announces which company will supply the replacement aircraft for Air Canada's 727 fleet. There is great concern in the Province of Manitoba, where the 727 is serviced, that as it is replaced Manitoba could lose jobs. This statement is clear evidence that the Government cannot guarantee Manitoba that the replacement aircraft will be maintained in Manitoba, no more than it can guarantee any other part of Canada that Air Canada services will continue. That is the blunt reality. That is not my interpretation. The words are there and the Government simply did not have the good sense to realize what a contradiction it had committed to paper.