

Supply

I support the motion presented by the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans) which says, and I quote:

That this House believes that the recent action by Air Canada, in suspending flight attendant Toni Corrado for 30 days as the result of her reply to questions from a Progressive Conservative convention delegate during a flight from Vancouver to Montreal, was improper and denies the principle of free speech as guaranteed in Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Mr. Speaker, I agree with the wording of the motion, but unlike the Hon. Member for Regina, I am not prepared to condemn Air Canada out of hand. I am inclined to think there are certain aspects and certain facts we do not know, and before condemning the Crown corporation in such a cavalier fashion, just like that, I want to know all the facts. I would like to know exactly what happened.

Mr. Valcourt: Exactly!

Mr. Ouellet: Unfortunately, the only facts we have at this time are, that a letter from a Mrs. Donna Ford was sent to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Mazankowski), complaining about what was said by a flight attendant on an Air Canada flight. The Minister released this letter, in which it is obvious that the sender is a friend of the Progressive Conservative Party, at the very least, if not a personal friend of the Minister. The fact that she addresses him as "Dear Don" obviously implies that she is on friendly terms with the Minister.

The second fact we know is that the correspondence section of the Minister's Office sent the complaint to Air Canada. We have no idea how such complaints or exchanges of correspondence between the Minister's Office and Air Canada are handled.

And the third fact we know is, that Air Canada suspended the flight attendant.

And finally, the fourth fact we know is, that Donna Ford, according to the *Toronto Star*, seems to be very pleased with the flight attendant's suspension, since, and I quote the *Toronto Star*:

[English]

Donna Ford, a member of this central British Columbia community's Tory riding association, answered with an emphatic "No," when asked whether she felt sorry for air Canada employee Toni Corrado, 38, of Metro Toronto.

It is clear that this Progressive Conservative supporter seems to be absolutely untouched and feels no sympathy for the airline employee who has been suspended. The article goes on to say:

—Ford said yesterday that the reaction "is not my problem. I left it up to Air Canada.

● (1730)

If she wanted to leave it with Air Canada, why did she not write to Air Canada in the first place? If I have a problem with my luggage at an airport, I do not call the Minister's office nor do I write a letter: "Dear Don". I talk to Air Canada employees and I try to solve my problems with Air Canada. There is a gentleman opposite saying something that is totally wrong. I would like in other circumstances and in another place

to make sure that he knows the facts before saying things incorrectly.

Mr. Greenaway: You should know the facts before you make a statement like that.

Mr. Ouellet: The reality is that the lady wrote to the Minister on a first name basis. If Air Canada receives a letter like that, the implication is that the Minister wants Air Canada to act.

Some Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Ouellet: That is where the problem begins. Unfortunately, it is most regrettable that Air Canada has treated this memo from the Minister's office as an order to suspend the employee.

I was listening to remarks made by Conservative Members, who used to be the great defenders of collective bargaining. Some years ago when they were on this side of the House they were pushing for legislation to curtail the right to strike being given to employees. They were pushing for actions to curtail the fundamental rights of employees and they were pushing to do away with collective bargaining in many instances. It is strange and surprising today that they are all hiding behind the due process of collective bargaining to explain the suspension of Toni Corrado. They are being unco-operative in this instance. Clearly if the Minister was ready to send the first note to Air Canada, he should be ready to send a second note and indicate to Air Canada that it should forget about this regrettable incident. I say this because I cannot blame Air Canada without knowing all the facts. Maybe there are other factors unknown to us. If there are, surely it is the responsibility of Air Canada or the Minister to have the facts made known, otherwise it creates an impression that the Government is trying to impose its will on Crown corporations as we have seen the Government impose its will on government employees and even on private entrepreneurs.

[Translation]

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but relate this incident to a series of other incidents which have occurred in recent weeks and months and which show how far this Conservative Government is prepared to go in its attempt to intimidate people who do not belong to the Party or do not share its views.

Remember the case of Radio-Canada reporter de la Grange against whom legal action was taken because he had quite properly served the interests of all Canadians by showing them how easy it was to by-pass the airport security system.

So how was Mr. de la Grange rewarded for rendering this service to the traveling public? The Government took this reporter to court for doing nothing more than his job, for while doing his job he happened to ridicule the Minister of Transport (Mr. Mazankowski) and the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) who said himself shortly before that—