

Government Orders

Minister of Transport said that the federal government was considering setting up a royal commission of inquiry into the privatization of Pearson Airport. This fact was reported in *La Presse* on November 29 last. The Minister of Transport himself suggested that such a commission be established.

Why then are our colleagues opposite so surprised when barely a few months ago, they shared our position on this issue? Could it be because the members on this side have not changed their minds and are not in the habit of doing so every few months?

Why did we not change our minds? Why are we asking for a royal commission of inquiry to save millions of dollars, perhaps hundreds of millions in the long run, to the taxpayers, but above all to clarify whether the government's hands are clean? That is the whole question.

Why is it that, while the Nixon report, which surprisingly enough took only 30 days to produce, states that there has been wrongdoing in connection with lobbying, it gives no specific example of such practice?

Also, why compensate people for costs incurred in such instances? My mother used to tell me, as a child, that honesty pays. Was she right or not?

Why does the government continue to refuse to release the privatization contract concerning Pearson Airport? There are many unanswered questions, are there not? Many questions that will do nothing to improve the Liberal Party's credibility rating, if it has any credibility left.

The reason we are opposing Bill C-22 and asking the government, for its own good and in the interest of the Canadian population as a whole, to shed light onto these obscure dealings is to get all these questions answered. Of course, that is if the government has nothing to hide; otherwise, its reluctance is understandable.

In closing, let me repeat the amendment moved by the Bloc Québécois:

"This House declines to give second reading to Bill C-22, An Act respecting certain agreements concerning the redevelopment and operation of Terminals 1 and 2 at Lester B. Pearson International Airport, because the principle of the Bill is flawed due to the fact that it contains no provisions aimed at making the work done by lobbyists more transparent."

We also support the amendment to amendment moved by the Reform Party to add "in Canada" after the word "lobbyists".

• (1620)

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac): Mr. Speaker, as my colleagues have been doing for two days, I want to speak on the shady privatization of Pearson Airport. It is obviously a question of money but it is also a matter of principle concerning the

very foundation of the federal system, namely the financing of political parties.

When stories such as this still make headlines in 1994, we wonder if democracy has made progress or if we are still facing the dubious tactics of the good old 1940s. Now, my dear friends, Mr. Speaker, I would like to relate to you a story my mother and father told me more than once. My father, an important lumber dealer and a highly-regarded Liberal organizer—back in the 1940s, of course—who raised enormous amounts of money for the Liberal Party, had the opportunity to acquire machinery no longer needed after World War II, such as tracked vehicles and tanks. He leased flat cars from Canadian Pacific in Toronto and he was always telling me what a good deal it was. He told me: "I sold one and all the others were free and clear". He was of course a friend of the government. All his friends in the community tried to buy some but they were all gone, as friends of the government had bought everything they could lay their hands on at ridiculous prices.

Before the last election, I was living quietly in my little community and looking from afar at what politicians with various levels of credibility were trying to do. Sometimes they did well, other times not so well. Political criticisms and analyses always apply to what the media choose to report. We are not so gullible as to believe that newspapers are always unbiased and always report all the facts. Not everything should be taken for granted.

So, the media report horror stories suggesting that the government is not doing its job. We object and say it makes no sense, but, deep down, we wonder what is true. Barring some exceptions, nothing is black or white. For example, there was the Malaroi case, where virtue was pitted against bureaucracy, and where my colleague from Québec-Est spared no effort. Normally, sensationalism is profitable, not subtleties. As to the case before us today, even if we were not in the House when the story first broke, we realize that the more we learn from the media, the less we understand.

Even if all members in the House know the story, I will summarize it briefly as I, the member for Frontenac, see it.

The contract to privatize Pearson Airport was signed on October 7, 1993. As we all remember, that was only 18 days before the defeat of the Conservative government. And in Quebec, like elsewhere, polls were conducted almost every day. And the closer we got to October 25, the lower the Conservatives were in those polls. Time was of the essence; this could not wait until after the election; the Conservatives were no longer in the picture. You remember as well as I do what happened. Two bidders fought hard to get a contract worth several million dollars. To succeed, the two finally merged and got the contract on October 7.