When we consider this definition the difference between the Liberals and Conservatives becomes crystal clear. They are simply different circles of friends. The Conservative Party is just such a circle of people bound together by common association, bearing allegiance to one another within the party because of generations of common involvement and association. I say generations because this is the case of the old line parties. The Conservatives have been around for over a century. Today's young Conservative might say: "My father was a Conservative, and my grandfather. I am going to vote Conservative".

Imagine how deep party roots go; old friendships, old acquaintances, old loyalties, old trusts and yes, old favours and old debts. The bad goes with the good. Where there are common political commitments there are inevitable favours that go back a long time, and how are these favours repaid? Sometimes they are paid by patronage, sometimes by prestige, sometimes by simple influence and sometimes by money.

When I began my talk today I noted that a political party must have two elements, a circle of friends and a common political purpose. Over generations of political life the purpose begins to waver. Because the political direction seems secure people lose sight of the great political purpose for which they were bound together in the first place and the circle of friends becomes ever more important.

In time unfortunately the circle of friends can completely overshadow the political purpose and the friendships take over. The public interest becomes lost somewhere between the shuffle of favour after favour and the public interest begins to suffer.

This is how political corruption develops. This is exactly how the Conservative Party of Canada has corrupted itself in this Pearson airport deal; a tight circle of friends, bound together no longer by common political purpose but by using their political associations to benefit financially from the public purse.

This is why I believe Canada needs the Reform Party. Canada needs a new circle of friends, people who feel a deeper friendship for the people of Canada and their interests than with each other; a circle of reform minded friends who are joined in a passionate, idealistic political purpose, Canadians for whom that common political purposes stands far above any of these associations for personal gain.

After developing the background in this way, let us now turn to the bill before us. The media did a fine job of exposing the corruption inherent in the Pearson airport contract, the Conservative circle of friends who were benefiting very handsomely from their political friendships in the dying days of the Tory administration.

The Liberals did a fine thing, the right thing, when they promised during the election campaign to stop the deal on behalf of all Canadians. It is not unethical to scrap a contract that was corrupt in the very first place.

The Reform Party of Canada does not oppose the broad outlines of this bill. We agree with its general concept and we agree especially on section 9 of the bill which reads: "No one is entitled to any compensation from Her Majesty in connection with the coming into force of this act".

• (1020)

If the contract was a corruption on the bidding process in the first place so the parameters of the tender were written to suit just one bid then the entire process is rightly null and void. No compensation should be owed by the crown to these people.

Unfortunately while the Liberals were making a political promise during the election there was a fly in the ointment.

Amid the good things that are being done, toward the end of Bill C–22 in clause 10 there is a statement which causes us to stop short: "If the minister considers it appropriate to do so, the minister may, with the approval of the Governor in Council, enter into agreements on behalf of Her Majesty to provide for the payment of such amounts as the Minister considers appropriate".

The intention of the act is to right a wrong. It is to stop corruption. It is to reverse a deal which benefited a circle of friends in an unethical way. The government declared rightly when it said that it owed no compensation to anyone.

Why then does the act contain a clause which allows the minister to make any payment he chooses, only needing the approval of cabinet which makes its decisions behind closed doors?

After trumpeting self–righteously about the evils of the deal, the minister now gives himself and the cabinet the authority to make a secret deal with the old Conservatives instead of being up front with the people of Canada. Why would that be? Instead of Conservative friends, it could be that there are Liberal friends who took part in this deal whom the minister has not forgotten.

After publicly exposing and denouncing the corruption inherent in the Conservative deal are the Liberals now having the same thing to do with their Liberal circle of friends?

I would note for the public record, and not particularly with glee but with sadness, that there are also many Liberals involved in the contract. Claridge Properties is a company heavily involved. It is controlled by a prominent Liberal Party supporter and fundraiser. There is a Liberal senator involved, a Liberal organizer and a lobbyist. And of course Liberal veteran Bob Nixon was coincidentally named to investigate all the factors in this organization.