

Air Canada

them to serve parts of the country which cannot be served by other airlines. We want them to make a profit. We want them to give better service than is given by similar airlines in other countries. We want them to put in fewer seats than do similar airlines in other countries. In effect, we have asked them to do what is impossible; and when they cannot do it, we complain. I do not think that is right.

I cannot agree with the motion, because it would be folly to operate Crown corporations in other than a businesslike way as far as possible. Such an approach would discourage Crown corporations from even contemplating making a profit, and that is something which no responsible government could endorse. So with all due respect to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, when he reflects on the motion which he has put on the order paper I am sure he will see that it really does not make sense even to one who fundamentally supports the concept of this kind of Crown corporation, to one who believes strongly that Air Canada should serve communities across the country, and to one who thinks that Air Canada, particularly under the new management, has done an excellent job in satisfying a lot of very difficult and almost irreconcilable requests of the government, members of parliament and the House of Commons.

● (1552)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Don Mazankowski (Vegreville): Mr. Speaker, I should like to rise in opposition to the motion which we are debating. I listened with interest for a while to the hon. member for Spadina (Mr. Stollery), and I did not know whether he was for or against the motion. I had difficulty following his rationale, but it was nice to see him back on board. It should be noted that this particular amendment had the support of the Liberal and Conservative parties in committee.

We are not debating whether Air Canada is a good or a bad airline. We all agree that the airline stacks up very well in terms of all the carriers involved in the carrying of passengers, both domestically and internationally. It is fair to say that the leadership and management which is provided by the present chief executive officer is sound. Actually, it goes beyond that: the kind of managerial expertise that the present chief executive officer has brought to Air Canada augurs well and creates, probably, a new climate of confidence in the area of Crown corporations. This is something which is really needed, having regard to some of the revelations which have occurred during the past 12 or 18 months.

The hon. member referred to the fact that the airline industry is heavily subsidized, which is true. There is not one form of transportation in this country which is not subsidized in some way, shape or form. This bill sets out to provide the avenue for which the subsidy can be identified, which is important. The hon. member referred to the fact that Pacific Western Airlines was taken over by the free enterprise government of the province of Alberta. PWA is certainly better off in the hands of a private enterprise government than a socialist

[Mr. Stollery.]

government. Given the record of achievement of the Barrett government in British Columbia, it clearly speaks for itself.

When the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) introduced this amendment he said the following:

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this report stage amendment to Bill C-17 is to strike out a few ridiculous lines which were written into the bill when it was in the hands of the Standing Committee on Transportation and Communications.

All we are saying here is something which is very, very significant, particularly at this juncture in our history and our economic climate. The words the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre wants to remove read as follows:

(1.1) In discharging its responsibilities under this act, the board shall have due regard to sound business principles, and in particular the contemplation of profit.

This is a directive to the board of directors of Air Canada, comprised of the chairman and the president appointed pursuant to section 5. I heard the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre refer to those lines as being ridiculous and all I can say is that if we have more than an average number of Canadians who feel that way, then we are in serious trouble in this country. This particular amendment was thoroughly and extensively debated in committee. I think it is reasonable and realistic, and certainly it is a fair directive to advance in any business enterprise, be it a private enterprise venture or a Crown corporation. The hon. member seems to disregard anything which would characterize efficiency, orderly management, productivity or profit. It seems that sound business sense is something the hon. member does not have in his vocabulary.

There has been an implication by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, and I believe the hon. member for Spadina, that good service cannot be provided and at the same time a profit made. As far as I am concerned, the two are almost inseparable. If you have a good enterprise which is functioning smoothly, doing a good job, making a profit, expanding, upgrading and streamlining its operations, in order to maintain a proper capital equity and cash flow, and in order to streamline and mechanize, you have to make a profit in order to provide that service. These two principles are compatible with one another. I see no difficulty in combining the two and providing a directive to any business enterprise which is engaged in the transportation of people. As the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. McKenzie) said, many of the economic problems we have in this country and many of the problems we have in some of our government-run agencies are primarily because sound business principles have not been the primary motivating factor.

The hon. member made reference to the mismanagement in government circles and the fact that the Auditor General indicated in his last report that the government is close to losing control of the purse-strings, and even parliament. It behooves us all to take a second look at operations involving the use of public funds. When we are dealing with a Crown corporation such as this, we are dealing with public funds. The hon. member also said that we have been engaged in pursuing sound business principles for the last 110 years. I categorically reject that statement. The facts speak for themselves. The hon.