

Air Canada

● (2130)

Mr. Neil Young (Beaches): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to support the amendments moved by the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow). Air Canada exists for a very good reason. One does not have to fly from Newfoundland and Labrador to Victoria to understand why Air Canada exists. It exists for exactly the same reason as the CBC. It is one of the structures in Canada that is necessary to hold the country together and provide services which would not be available to Canadians if it did not exist.

Canadians understand that perfectly. Not long ago I had an opportunity to travel to Sydney and Cape Breton. I was quite surprised to learn that there was no longer an Air Canada DC-9 service from Halifax to Sydney. Instead, I believe there was a Dash-8 service in its place, which creates horrendous problems for many Canadians with mobility difficulties. I thought there was unanimous agreement in this House that no Member on any side of the House wanted to see a reduction in services for disabled Canadians. A key issue which arose in the Special Committee on the Disabled and the Handicapped and was reflected in the recommendations made in the *Obstacles* report that Members on all sides of the House supported was that it was absolutely demeaning for an individual who required a wheelchair to gain access to an aircraft only to have that access by a fork-lift truck.

Mr. Redway: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. This is the debate on report stage, not second reading debate on the principle of the Bill. I hope you will draw the Hon. Member's attention to that fact. His remarks should be relevant to the amendments before the House rather than debate on the question of principle that was dealt with at second reading.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): I realize that the Hon. Member for York East (Mr. Redway) has sent a message to everyone in the House. However, the Chair has been fairly lenient tonight as everyone has gone a little beyond the scope of the motions.

However, I would still ask the Hon. Member to keep his remarks as close as possible to the motions before the House. The Hon. Member for Beaches (Mr. Young).

Mr. Young: Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member for York East (Mr. Redway) has made so many interventions that he may as well have made a 10-minute speech. The House would have found that to be of much more value than his interventions.

I believe I am talking to the amendments because they clearly indicate that if they are not accepted by the House, the privatization of Air Canada will mean a reduction of services to Canadians. There is absolutely no question in my mind that if this Bill is not amended according to these proposed amendments reduction in service will occur. I believe my comments are entirely relevant. Of course, I accept your admonition that I should be a bit careful in order not to attract

the wrath of the Hon. Member for York East, but I think the problems that this Bill will create without those amendments will mean tremendous hardship for a substantial number of disabled Canadians who require a wheelchair in order to have accessibility.

I have no idea why the Hon. Member for York East would object to our talking about the problems that that segment of the population will face if these amendments are not adopted by the House. Furthermore, the refusal of these amendments will also affect the issue of the one fare policy that has been with the Government for some time now. That is a policy whereby the CTC made a commitment to allow an individual who was unable to travel alone to have an attendant travel with him for the price of one fare. I suspect that this policy issue is being held up by the CTC because it wants to see this Bill passed. I further suggest that without the adoption of these amendments I doubt very much we will see that policy established at Air Canada or any other air carrier in this country.

I repeat that Air Canada exists to be a unifying force across Canada. If it is privatized, I suspect that management will cut out routes that may not be profitable because they cannot make a dollar. That will affect many communities in Canada.

The other day I spoke to a person who told me that it was more expensive to travel from Toronto to Newfoundland than from Toronto to Florida. Air Canada told me that it was more expensive because the volume of people travelling between Toronto and Florida was greater than from Toronto to Newfoundland. When management begins making decisions based on private enterprise rather than on public policy, one can well imagine what will happen to airline traffic in many communities that are now served by Air Canada because other private operators will not service them.

According to Angus Reid polls the majority of Canadians support Air Canada. As a matter of fact, the figures are quite dramatic. Angus Reid found that 63 per cent of Canadians believed Air Canada was well run, as opposed to 20 per cent who thought it was not well run. The same kind of popular support applies to CBC for exactly the same reason. The CBC is a unifying force in Canada and provides a service to many communities that is not provided by private networks.

The Hon. Member for York East asks about Canada Post. Seventy-two per cent of the respondents said that Canada Post is not well run. Angus Reid did not need to ask Canadians about that. He could have simply asked Members of Parliament, who would tell him that Canada Post is not well run.

Mr. Skelly: The Tories are running that.

Mr. Young: The Tories are running Canada Post. Imagine what will happen with Air Canada.

Mr. Redway: They run Air Canada too. That is why it is so popular.