

We have watched federal Conservative Members of Parliament and cabinet Ministers use the anti-port arguments and half-truths of the grain elevator companies and CN.

Now it is time for the new Minister of Transport (Mr. Bouchard) to declare his support for the Port of Churchill and to fight against the attempts by CN and others that are trying to close the port.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

AIR CANADA

SALE OF SHARES

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. At 11.51 yesterday morning in the House of Commons the Deputy Prime Minister made the following statement:

The legislation will permit the transfer of all Air Canada shares to the public.

At 2.18 yesterday afternoon in the House of Commons the Prime Minister made the following statement: "There is a possibility that shares in Air Canada will be sold to the public, but the Government would certainly retain the majority interest".

One of the two statements made to the House of Commons yesterday is false. The question the public—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, come on!

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): It is right on. The question the Canadian public is asking is: who is speaking for the Government? The Prime Minister—

● (1420)

Mr. Speaker: I am sure the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition means that a statement is incorrect. I ask that he conclude his question.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Who, then, is speaking for the Government—the Prime Minister or the Deputy Prime Minister? Will the Government retain majority control and the majority of the shares of Air Canada, or are all the shares up for sale and is this a total sell-out of the airline?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I wish the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition would stop being so silly and childish, indeed irresponsible. If he wants an explanation he can come into my office right after Question Period and I will explain it to him. He should read the whole statement. It is very clear. Legislation will in fact be brought before the House and then he can see precisely what we will be doing.

Oral Questions

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Obviously the Deputy Prime Minister has a weak case. If he wants to tell me in private, I say tell me in public right here on the floor of the House of Commons.

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, in January 1985 the Prime Minister said: "Air Canada is not for sale". Yesterday, Canadians realized that he really meant Air Canada was not for sale just then. Yesterday, the Prime Minister said the Government would certainly retain a controlling interest in Air Canada. Today, it seems the Government will do so but only for the time being.

If the Government is really determined to sell Air Canada, which I think is a poor decision, it should come right out and admit it, as it should admit that the Prime Minister of Canada misled Canadians in 1985 and again yesterday, here in the House.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we just heard the distorted truth, the distorted reality from the Leader of the Opposition. He said: "The Prime Minister stated Air Canada was not for sale". However, on January 15, 1985, the press quoted the Prime Minister as follows: "There is a possibility that Air Canada shares will be sold to the general public, but the Government would certainly retain a controlling interest".

[English]

And in English: "Prime Minister Brian Mulroney said Monday—" this was on January 15, 1985, "—that Air Canada is not for sale but did not rule out selling a minority interest". What is taking place is exactly consistent with what I indicated at the time, with the needs of Air Canada. We are talking about the future, of making Air Canada an important instrument of growth and unity. We are strengthening Air Canada.

We want to talk about the future. I invite the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition to focus on the future and the needs of Air Canada and Canadians. We will take him on on that any day of the week.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): The Prime Minister once said that Air Canada is not for sale. Now he says not at this time.

CONTROL OF CORPORATION—RETENTION OF MAINTENANCE FACILITIES

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister said that the Government would retain a majority of the shares, but the Deputy Prime Minister said no, all the Air Canada shares are available to the public. That is what he said yesterday morning.

Mr. Andre: False.