

Air Canada

more cities and towns than our national airline, Air Canada, is serving.

The Opposition talks about contracting out of services and the fear that aircraft would be serviced overseas. Certainly no one in their right mind would think that an aircraft that needs servicing would not be serviced in another country but flown back to Canada. If it requires servicing in another country overseas, I am sure no pilot would take his plane off the ground to fly it back to Canada. Pilots have the greatest respect for safety and we should be proud that all Canadian airlines operate with a good safety record. We know that there will be accidents. Some of them will be a result of mechanical problems and some will be from human error. I do not think we will ever erase that possibility.

The airline employees who appeared before the committee were received quite favourably by the Liberal Government in 1981 when it was looking at the possibility of privatizing Air Canada. That is how that group of 7,500 came about.

Members have said that they did not have a chance for questioning enough people. The Canadian Air Line Pilots Association appeared. All of the unions representing the employees appeared, and there were two from the private sector. I might add, they were on the list of witnesses which the Opposition wanted to appear.

As far as I know, the Conservative majority on the committee willingly gave approval for the appearances of witnesses that the Opposition put forward.

I do not know why they did not want to have a group of people representing some 7,500 who voluntarily contributed to that association to appear before the committee and add their views on what was being said.

Of course, Air Canada management appeared. I was somewhat taken back when the Hon. Member for Cape Breton—The Sydneys (Mr. MacLellan) refused to question the airline ownership committee witnesses. I was astonished because I thought he would have wanted to get another view from the employees.

I do not know why the opposition Members want to travel across Canada. This matter has been discussed for some time and contrary to their view that people who appeared before the committee did not have enough time to prepare briefs, I suggest that they had months to prepare their briefs. They knew what they were doing. I was somewhat surprised that they could not put up stronger arguments against privatization.

Mr. Orlikow: Mr. Speaker, this supposed Air Canada group that believes in privatization has been in existence, they say, for more than four years. They have no formal organization, no membership list, no officers and no constitution. They certainly did not present us with a list of the 7,500 employees who have contributed. That is why we are skeptical about them.

The Hon. Member says that the railway was built by private interests. Of course it was, but surely the Member knows that the CPR promoters were encouraged to build the railway because they were given loans and grants, which were never repaid, in the form of hundreds of millions of acres of land which were worth hundreds of millions of dollars at that time and probably worth hundreds of billions of dollars now.

The Member suggests that our airlines are safe. I remind the Member that a royal commission led by Mr. Justice Dubin looked into airline safety and procedures in northern Ontario. His report was scathing.

I remind the Member from Newfoundland that the former Leader of the NDP in Alberta, Grant Notley, was killed in the crash of a small feeder airline plane which, according to reports, should never have travelled. The pilot travelled because the company was so determined to make a profit that it told him he either fly or be fired. This was not once, but many times.

We have very legitimate reasons for being very suspicious about the downgrading of safety standards in the airline industry in this country because of deregulation and because of privatization. The Member comes from Newfoundland, which has a very small and sparse population. He should be much more interested in safety than he seemed to be in his remarks today.

Mr. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, if the Hon. Member will take the time to read *Hansard*, he will recognize that I did not say that airlines in Canada never have accidents. I said that we should be proud of the fact that our airlines have such a high standard of safety as they do.

I am concerned about safety, whether it is in Newfoundland or any part of Canada. To try to put fear into the people of Canada, as some members of the Opposition are doing, to say that our standard of safety will decrease, is hypocritical, I suggest. They should not do that. They are putting fear into the minds of people that it is not safe to travel on any airline except the one owned by the people of Canada, Air Canada.

Other airlines in this country have a good safety margin. I am not afraid to travel on any of them. We all realize that even if you walk down the street there is a certain element of danger. When one takes into consideration the number of people driving automobiles and the number of people who travel by air, it is safer to travel on an aircraft than it is to drive a motor car. Why do they not admit that?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Does the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North wish to respond?

Mr. Orlikow: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions and comments are now terminated. Debate.