

Toronto Island Airport

Bill C-76 is not an omnibus Bill. It is a particular and specific piece of legislation which has the greatest impact on the airport, people living on the Island, environmental groups, naturalist organizations and Torontonians in general. Therefore, this Party, through the Hon. Member for Davenport, suggested that it would be logical, sensitive and productive to conduct a public meeting, preferably on the Island, to look at Bill C-76 in order to provide the greatest opportunity for individuals in Toronto to come before that committee and explain their fears and aspirations with respect to Bill C-76. Again, that recommendation was turned down by members of the Government and, again, this Party asks why, as do other Canadians. Why do they turn down an opportunity to allow for greater input into what is basically a very localized issue? It would have only meant an extra meeting or two but it would have assured us that before proceeding in this House we would have the concurrence of individuals who would be directly affected by this Bill. But it seems that the Government just likes to talk about consultation. It tells us it likes to talk to Canadians in order to reach a broad consensus. But when it comes down to the point of whether the Government will do it or not, it does not. It is like the de Havilland situation. The Government said how great the deal was. It told us: "Here is a corporation whose shareholders are Canadians living from coast to coast". Yet it was a struggle to get information from the Government and it was a struggle to get a committee to investigate the de Havilland situation. This particular piece of legislation can be looked at from the same perspective. The opportunity for discussion and input from residents of the City of Toronto, who are involved directly in this situation, was turned down by the Government.

● (1425)

Another matter is the approach the Government takes in looking at Bill C-76. We had an indication of this by the Parliamentary Secretary who quoted statistics about the landings and take-offs, and perhaps more so by the Solicitor General (Mr. Beatty) in his speech at the beginning of second reading in which he told us how many planes land, how many planes take off, and the fact that we are going to expand the airport, that we are going to get a new control tower and so on. But the Government looked at this from a very narrow perspective. It looked upon this issue as purely a landing and taking-off type of operation. It failed to look at the whole infrastructure of the Island.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Marchi: Hon. Members opposite laugh.

Mr. Forrestall: What do you do with an airport except take off and land?

Mr. Marchi: Perhaps they laugh because they do not understand the seriousness and complexity of the infrastructure surrounding this particular airport. The Island should not only be looked at as a take-off and landing strip for Dash-7's and Dash-8's. That is only one part of what the Island is used for. It is a beautiful set of islands. Perhaps Hon. Members opposite

who are laughing do not understand that on Ward Island there is a beautiful community of individuals and families. They also probably do not understand that there are parks and trails on these islands and that this is a green oasis for some 250 bird species. Millions of birds are counted annually on that island. There are countless environmental groups, naturalist organizations, and visiting children who go to the Island each and every single day.

The islands are used as a recreational and environmental centre for Torontonians. In the hub of one of the largest cosmopolitan cities in the world, these islands represent an escape valve, an environmental treasure. So it is fine to look at the question from the aerospace perspective, but that should be complemented by the other issues I have outlined. We cannot separate the two because the entire infrastructure is there on the Island. Therefore, to look at the islands as just a take-off and landing pad is a mistake. We in this Parliament are also responsible to the individuals who live on the islands and their recreational and environmental aspects.

● (1430)

That brings us back to the initial terms and conditions arrived at in 1983. It did not happen by chance or by accident that those terms and conditions were drafted as they were. They resulted from public hearings and input from environmental groups and residents of the City of Toronto. It was only then that the federal Government negotiated the agreement which secured the viability of the islands for the various individuals and groups. This Bill could have offered the protection those individuals and groups were looking for if the Government had at the very outset, in the interpretation clause, specified very clearly once and for all that the terms and conditions of the lease agreement are still in force. Had that been done, we would not have needed to talk about expropriation. We would not have needed to give additional powers to the commissioners to write by-laws. The conditions would set the course and determine how the airport was managed.

The Parliamentary Secretary said that the Hon. Member for Davenport all of a sudden has concerns that he did not have some years ago. Of course he has come concerns now because in 1983 there was no cause for concern. The concerns were addressed in the lease arrangement. He is concerned now, as am I and my Party, because those terms and conditions are very fuzzy and iffy because they are not referred to in this legislation. Therefore, even though we are at third reading, I had hoped the committee and the Government would have accepted the amendment we put forward to indicate very clearly that the terms and conditions fought for and on behalf of the City of Toronto residents, Island residents and environmental groups and organizations, would still be respected. That is not the case and that is why we fear this legislation is not as strong as it should be.

Mr. Dan Heap (Spadina): Mr. Speaker, I am partly in agreement with the Hon. Member who has just spoken. This Bill is not what it should have been. However, I think on one