

Air Canada

doors of the Canadian Government saying "Sell Air Canada". Probably a majority of the evidence shows that most Canadians would like Air Canada to stay the way it is as a public utility, as a successful enterprise, which can serve a public purpose rather than being transformed into a purely commercial enterprise whose only purpose can be to make a dollar.

There is nothing wrong with making a dollar, Madam Speaker, but we also have to serve the public purpose and build a nation. We already have airlines in Canada which are dedicated to making a buck and making a profit. We are content to allow that to happen. That is legitimate, but why must all airlines in Canada have as their primary purpose the making of a dollar as their top priority? Why can we not have at least one airline whose purpose it is to knit the country together and help build the nation? I ask again, why is this neo-Conservative Government, this conservative Party which has abandoned the Canadian notion of Conservatism to adopt an American notion of the market-place, selling off Air Canada? Why does the Government insist on selling Air Canada? Is it as a public enterprise unsuccessful? Is it as a public enterprise draining the public purse and not making a profit? The answer is absolutely not. Air Canada over the last couple of decades of operation has made a profit in all but two years. Over-all the profits, if I remember correctly, total something like \$300 million.

Air Canada is a successful enterprise that serves the public purpose, helps to build our nation, and most people would like to see it remain as a public utility. It is a successfully run corporation. Why fix something if it is not broken? Why sell it off if it is functioning well as a public enterprise? I have no satisfactory answers to those questions. I would challenge Members opposite to rise to give some rational reasons for selling off Air Canada.

● (1250)

In addition, I want to say something about how the Government is selling off Air Canada. It is not only Members of the New Democratic Party, us of the social democratic persuasion, who are questioning the Government's action. Some business people are questioning it. Sir Colin Marshall has expressed skepticism about the approach the Government is taking to the sale of Air Canada.

I see in today's *Globe and Mail* that Sir Colin Marshall, the Chief Executive of British Airways, has said that he questions the way the Government is privatizing Air Canada. He is essentially saying that it ain't going to work. The Government is partially privatizing Air Canada and Sir Colin Marshall is saying that if the Government of the day is to be successful in its aim, an aim we do not share, then it has to go all the way.

Either this partial privatization effort will be a complete failure and will not raise the moneys the Government hopes it will raise or else the assurances the Government is giving Canadians that it intends to maintain control so that public policy objectives are pursued are false assurances.

Perhaps this is the first step of a two-step process, and the Government is sort of sneaking in full privatization under the blanket of partial privatization.

The Government's action has been criticized by a chief executive officer from the private sector in Britain who has been involved in a privatization scheme that worked, at least from that philosophical perspective. I wonder why the Government is seeking to sell off Air Canada. I have to conclude it is because the Conservative Party has adopted a new American philosophy of conservatism, a philosophy that puts the market-place above all other considerations, that puts making a buck above building a nation and that puts more emphasis on profit than on service.

I think the Government is doing this for ideological reasons rather than for practical, understandable reasons. As I said before, Air Canada works. It provides service and decent employment and it makes a profit. Why not leave it in the public sector?

I want to be a bit parochial for a moment. I would like to shift my concern specifically to Winnipeg and to my riding of Winnipeg North Centre. The people of Winnipeg are concerned about what will happen once Air Canada is privatized and starts to move away from the fleet it presently has to perhaps airbus. They are concerned about whether or not there will still be a place for Winnipeg in the aerospace industry.

Winnipeggers have already had the experience of being robbed of our place in the aerospace industry. We are afraid that the pattern will repeat itself. We are afraid that once the airline is privatized, it will be possible and even likely that the Government will reduce the air maintenance work that takes place in Winnipeg. We would like to have some real assurances from the Government that Winnipeg will have a place in the aerospace industry.

I see that you are signalling that my time is almost up, Madam Speaker. Air Canada is making a profit and providing a service. It helps knit Canada together. It also reassures the people of Winnipeg that there will be a role for them in the aerospace industry as long as Air Canada remains in the public sector.

Why is the Government seeking to sell off Air Canada if it is not to reduce the workforce in places like Winnipeg, if it is not to find a way to reduce services to remote communities or if it is not simply to ride its own ideological hobby-horse? Air Canada has played a role in the building of the nation and it ought to remain in the public sector. Saying that Air Canada has lost its public purpose simply takes the narrow view of Air Canada, the view of a commercial enterprise, and forgets about its nation-building role.

Mr. McDermid: Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member spoke about Sir Colin Marshall's criticism of the sale of Air Canada. His criticism was that we should be selling all of Air Canada. He was not criticizing the actual privatization or the philosophy of privatization.