

**Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government):** Honourable senators, I think my friend will find that our mutual friend the Deputy Leader of the Government has an answer to that question which he proposes to table under Delayed Answers.

## INDIAN AFFAIRS

### PROPOSED FIRST NATIONS CHARTERED LAND ACT— REQUEST FOR DRAFT BILL

**Hon. Gildas L. Molgat (Deputy Leader of the Opposition):** My next question is with regard to a *Canadian Press* story. I will have to read some of it so that my honourable friend will know what it is I am seeking. The story reads, in part:

The federal government plans to soon shift its duty to manage Indian lands to natives through legislation that could erode what is already considered an inadequate aboriginal land base.

The proposed First Nations Chartered Land Act would override longstanding treaties, the British North America Act and even the 1763 Royal Proclamation as part of a major effort by Ottawa to “devolve” obligations and powers to natives.

I know my honourable friend does not respond to speculative news stories. However, this is not speculative because it goes on to say:

A Jan. 27 draft of the bill, obtained by *The Canadian Press*, creates the First Nations Land Board...

and so on. In view of the fact that *Canadian Press* has a copy of that draft bill, could the minister obtain a copy for us?

**Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government):** Honourable senators, I think I can say with some assurance that discussion of that matter, or on that point, is totally premature. My friend speaks of a draft bill. By whom was it prepared? Where is it? I am a minister of the Crown and I am on all the relevant committees of the Cabinet. We have never heard of, much less authorized the preparation of a draft bill of that kind. There are discussions going forward and consideration being given to the matter of devolution and alternatives to various sections of the Indian Act and so forth. No decisions of the type suggested in that article have been taken by the government, nor are such decisions anywhere near to being taken.

• (1420)

**Senator Molgat:** It may be that the government has not made a final decision on the matter. However, if there is a draft bill, someone has been thinking about the matter and doing some work, otherwise there would not be a draft bill.

Perhaps my friend could ask the department for whatever draft bills may be available. If they are now in the hands of the press and *Canadian Press* has one, surely legislators should also be entitled to receive a copy.

**Senator Murray:** Honourable senators, I will make those inquiries. If there are draftsmen spending their time on that type of exercise, they might be better employed working on drafts that we have authorized.

## TRANSPORT

### AIR PASSENGER TRANSPORTATION IN CANADA— GOVERNMENT POLICY

**Hon. H.A. Olson:** Honourable senators, Perhaps I may be permitted to ask the Leader of the Government in the Senate whether the government has a policy respecting national airlines. The situation with respect to the future of the airline business in Canada is heating up considerably in Alberta and British Columbia at the moment. There matters respecting the application by Canadian Airlines to have a form of merger with American Airlines has been referred to the Canadian Transport Commission.

Both Air Canada and Canadian Airlines have been following such predatory competitive practices recently that both companies have managed to lose about \$.5 billion in the last year. Therefore, it seems to me that it is the responsibility of the government to state its policy with respect to airlines, because obviously this situation cannot continue. Those airlines are financially crippled at the moment. What is the policy of the government with respect to air passenger transportation in Canada?

**Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government):** Honourable senators, the policy of the government on this matter is as announced during our first mandate by the then Minister of Transport, Mr. Mazankowski. There has been no change in that policy.

**Senator Olson:** I take it from that answer that if the management of each of these two airlines continues to attempt to run the other off the map of Canada, that will be acceptable policy to this government?

**Senator Murray:** Honourable senators, it is not for me to comment on the pricing practices of airlines operating in the private sector.

**Senator Olson:** I understand that. I am sure the government is aware that both airlines are getting into such deep financial difficulty that we could reach the stage where we have no airline industry in Canada at all to take care of the movement of people around the country. Is it the government's intention to stand idly by and watch that happen, whilst comforting themselves by saying, “It is none of our business what the pricing practice is”?