

300 destinations in 60 countries, Pearson airport is the hub of air transport in Canada.

According to a Transport Canada study dating from 1987, Pearson airport has direct economic spin-offs amounting to \$4 billion for the Ontario economy and it employs 56 000 people. Yet, not long ago, it was Montreal that was the hub of air traffic.

The federal government is responsible for major changes that have affected the location of the poles of economic activity. Quebec has long been suffering from federal interventionism within its economy. Pearson airport is benefitting from the side effects of one of these federal interventions, namely the building of Mirabel International Airport.

The Mirabel decision had horrible consequences for Quebec in several regards. Initially, the idea was to meet a demand that Dorval airport could no longer satisfy. Why not stick to consolidating Dorval infrastructures into one modern efficient airport that would have confirmed Montreal as the hub for the next 50 years? No. Politicians at the time agreed to build a second airport in Mirabel, 40 kilometres from Montreal and about a hundred kilometres from Ottawa, at a spot Highway 13 has not even reached yet.

Meanwhile, Quebec representatives were thinking about locating that airport in the Montreal–Sherbrooke–Quebec triangle in order to serve adequately the metropolitan area, as well as the old capital, while opening up, through Sherbrooke, to the big market of the East coast, with several million people. The federal government refused to listen and, while Quebec was pursuing its actions and its consultations, the federal government made a unilateral decision on March 27, 1969. Its airport would be located in Mirabel to serve, it was claimed, both the federal capital, Ottawa, and the Montreal metropolis.

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The federal government, with our money, was making a poisoned gift to Quebec. What a gift. It was depriving us of 95,856 acres of one of the best farming land. But most of all, Mirabel airport would gradually cause the Montreal area to lose its status as the hub of international air traffic in favour of Pearson airport in Toronto. While Mirabel was being built, the federal government was giving permission to all international airline companies to use the airport in Toronto, which could then provide all these services and keep expanding in one single airport.

A plot to move this economic activity 500 kilometres to the West could not have been more successful. This federal intervention resulted in a significant loss of jobs for Quebec. And who paid the bill? Quebecers themselves, with the taxes they are sending to Ottawa.

Government Orders

This kind of deplorable intervention by the federal against Quebec's interests is not the first and will not be the last, as long as Quebec remains in this federation. Interventionism has also affected all our oil and petro-chemical industry. In 1957, the Diefenbaker government established a Royal Commission on Energy chaired by Henry Borden. Of the six commissioners, Jean-Louis Lévesque, from Montreal, was the only one representing Quebec. The mandate of the Borden Commission was to examine all issues relating to energy, such as size of the domestic market, security of oil supply, the export volume and price.

The commission was anxious to develop this sector of the economy to become less dependent on other countries and at the same time reach the U.S. market. There was more to it, however. A jealous eye was cast on the oil refineries in Montreal, which some people wanted to see transferred to Ontario. The commission heard representations from independent producers who were in favour of building a pipeline from Edmonton to Montreal, so that Alberta crude would displace imported Venezuelan crude being refined in Montreal. However, Ontario was not really interested in this pipeline or western natural gas but in Montreal's major refineries.

Once again, as in so many other cases, the influence of the lobbyists was decisive. The project was opposed by the major oil multinationals. Finally, the commission recommended drawing a demarcation line along the Ottawa Valley. It recommended securing all markets to the west of this line for producers in Alberta. The federal government implemented this recommendation in 1961. Since the pipeline went to Toronto, Sarnia was born. The next step was to extend the pipeline to Montreal, and after taking away our refineries, English Canada was to take over the Montreal market.

We owe the disappearance of an entire petrochemical industry in East Montreal to Canada's national policy initiatives. Richard Séguin, one of our great singers from Quebec—the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry referred to him on February 9 as a great artist—tells us in one of his songs about the incredible human cost of the disappearance of East Montreal's refineries. At the end of his song he says to his father: "J'vais prier pour toi".

Another example, equally important, is the St. Lawrence Seaway. We all know that this access way to the Great Lakes, built with our taxes, sounded the death knell of the Port of Montreal. It contributed substantially towards shifting certain activities towards the West, while destroying Montreal's position as a transit zone for goods, services and people. We could have made Montreal the biggest interior port in the world, a real international hub.