

Government Orders

I am not entirely sure what is going to be done with the profit because the act does say that the "leased, sold or otherwise disposed of" airports. It does not say there could be no private companies, but it does not say it cannot create some kind of a corporation and, presumably, set up directorships and so on. I would suspect there is a lot of potential within that for being able to pay themselves rather handsomely as airport managers and chief executive officers, vice-presidents, and so on of the local airport authority.

I would suspect that as much as anything is what is behind most of this. Otherwise the government would be testing the Canadian entrepreneurial spirit in turning the small airports over.

The small airports will be staying in the hands of the Canadian public who are going to have to shoulder the burden of them running inefficiently, certainly as this government has proved it is able to do.

The minister has referred to the assurance that the aviation safety aspect which we now enjoy and as has been pointed out by one of the previous speakers, is pre-eminent in Canada. One of my colleagues was referring to a pilot from an airline in the United States who said that he would much rather fly on a Canadian carrier across the country than anything else whenever they had the opportunity.

I would suggest that that is something of which we are tremendously proud but I would also suggest that there is a tremendous amount of potential there for us to be losing that safety factor within the Canadian aviation industry.

I would also suggest that the whole matter of safety within the airports themselves, has been alluded to already, is going to suffer enormously. It is bad enough at the present time. There are many times when the Canadian public, if they really knew what was happening on the ground, would probably do the very best they could to avoid flying on those later flights. The evidence is certainly there that there is not a lot of protection when it comes to flying later in the day. Once these airports become privatized, there is every likelihood that that will increase much more.

As far as the workers themselves are concerned, the question again is begged because, as has been pointed out, the unions involved were not consulted. While the government seems to pride itself in saying that it very

seldom does anything such as this, bringing in legislation or making changes within the legislation without consulting the people involved, we know, of course, time after time, that is not the case. It is quite possible that it may have consulted with some of the people who will potentially be the heads of the local airport authorities. I would suspect it has. This bill is supposed to be about the protection of workers. Those who represent the workers now are not protected.

I would like to conclude by making reference again to the workers, and particularly to their probability maintaining the standard of living and the level of wages and benefit which they now do as employees of the federal government under these local airport authorities. While some of them may possibly be successful, some are not going to be successful. It begs the question: What are we going to do with these once well-paid, well-trained civil servants who will undoubtedly find themselves out of jobs because of the failure of some of the local airport authorities to be able to function in the manner in which the government so erroneously assumes they are going to be able to do?

There has to be some changes made to this legislation for the protection of the workers not just for the short term, but for the long term, over their whole working lives. We have to make sure of the remuneration for these people, and not just the permanent people, as the minister pointed out and as the legislation supposedly points out, although permanent may be the operative word. Possibly, the minister knows something that the rest of the committee does not know yet. It may be that, within the whole context of what is about to occur, we are going to find a tremendously larger number of temporary employees in these airports. That means that the standard of living of these people will be lower than ever before. This is a tragedy, but something which has to be addressed and certainly will be addressed before this legislation comes to a conclusion.

Speaking of conclusion, I would consider that to be the conclusion of my remarks at this stage of debate on this legislation.

Mr. Ross Belsher (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with an element of surprise as the hon. member described what he sees in this bill. I would wonder whether or not he has even read the bill.