

National Air Policy

The Leader of the Opposition gave us none today. Instead of divesting itself of Pacific Western Airlines, the Conservative government of Alberta has been extending its involvement in the private sector. Under Alberta ownership, not long ago Pacific Western Airlines went on to acquire Transair—not that this should not have happened under the circumstances, but it still does mean another form of extension of government ownership.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: We do not have an air service in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Gray: I think Canadians could well be troubled at seeing the official opposition remaining silent at a time when a Conservative provincial government gets involved in the air travel industry and, also opposes decisions made by the federal government that involve efforts on a national basis in the interests of all Canadians. After all, much of the past history and future of Canada are based on the development of its transportation systems.

This provided a reason, one important reason, for the regions of Canada coming together as one country in 1867 and afterwards. Transportation systems on a national basis are essential strands in the fabric holding this country together. The expertise of Canadians in transportation provides one of the key areas for the industrial strategy we need to make our economy more innovative and more competitive in domestic and international markets. The valuable and useful transportation policies we have had in the past, the necessity and the ability to improve them to meet the needs of Canada today and tomorrow show us why we must continue to have a strong federal government, which is not just one out of 11 governments within the land mass called Canada, but instead is a strong national government working in the interests of all the people of this country as Canadians.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gray: To conclude, the opposition motion, as explained by the Leader of the Opposition, conflicts with this essential objective for this country and its people. Therefore, I say it should not be supported. We should defeat it and go on to put into effect policies maintaining a strong central government, one which responds to the challenges and potential of this country and its people.

● (1712)

Mr. Thomas Siddon (Burnaby-Richmond-Delta): Mr. Speaker, I count it a great privilege to address this House today, sparsely populated as it is. I had hoped the minister would be here to hear my remarks because I have some things to say to him. It gives me great pleasure to be here together with the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) and with my highly respected colleague from Hamilton-Wentworth (Mr. Scott), and to speak in support of the motion before the House.

This motion of non-confidence cites a failure by government members opposite, a failure to implement a competitive air

[Mr. Gray.]

transportation policy which recognizes the legitimate and rightful aspirations of our private sector airlines. Indeed, this motion indicts the government for its repeated refusal to pay more than lip service to the common-sense principle that private sector airlines be allowed far greater freedom to compete with Air Canada. To be more specific, we believe that privately financed airlines should be entitled to a much greater share of the air transportation business in Canada, and that future growth must be directed almost entirely toward these privately-owned industries.

Today I will discuss the long and frustrating struggle of CP Air, formerly known as Canadian Pacific Airlines, which, as members know, is Canada's only privately-owned international flag carrier. In spite of its outstanding record of service to Canadians for more than 36 years, CP Air is restricted today to only one third the service volume of its major competitor, the government-owned Air Canada.

These unfair and inequitable policies of discrimination against private airlines such as CP Air must be laid squarely at the feet of the present Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) and his predecessor, Mr. Marchand. These ministers have, since 1973, demonstrated a remarkable dexterity. On the one hand, the ministers have repeatedly announced new initiatives which created the appearance of favouring CP Air's case for greater access to air routes.

On the other hand, and in each case, these same Ministers of Transport have reversed their earlier public commitments by giving approval to CTC recommendations and policies which were highly favourable to Air Canada and generally detrimental to the future of CP Air. The record bears close examination on this score and I intend to return to this point later to cite specific instances.

Mr. Speaker, as this occasion might be deemed my "maiden speech" in this House—I do not feel much like a maiden at the moment, but I will not go into the technical details of that—I beg your indulgence to allow me to digress for a few moments. It is certainly a great honour and a great obligation to be elected to this House as the representative of more than many thousands of people in the British Columbia riding of Burnaby-Richmond-Delta. I look forward to a healthy and productive fellowship with all members of this House and intend to conduct myself with diligence, decency and dignity in the prosecution of my duties here.

However, it would be remiss of me if I did not underscore the nature of my mandate for the next few months. I have been elected to bring the strong feelings of my constituents to bear on the deliberations of this government during its final days in office. I have been elected to help reveal the ineptitude, the inefficiency, and the callousness exhibited by the present administration during its ten years of dominance over this House.

The people of my riding have spoken, as did many other Canadians in at least ten ridings across this nation on October 16. Canadians are demanding a return to integrity and efficiency in the management of Canada's economy and of our human and natural resources. Canadians are fed up with this