

Canadian National Railways

Canada, and I plead strongly that we not be presented one of these days with a *fait accompli* under which the people of Canada may have lost their complete and exclusive ownership of this important and valuable air line.

In the early days when we were setting up what was then Trans-Canada Air Lines and were trying to make sure that it would be given the opportunity to become the company it is today, I remember the late Right Hon. C. D. Howe entering the debate at one point, and although his remarks were directed at some of us in this group his words none the less are appropriate today. He said that he hoped to make Trans-Canada Air Lines, as it was then, strong enough to withstand the attacks of its enemies and the support of its friends. I hope the present Air Canada is strong enough to withstand the attentions, or intentions—if you please—of some of its friends in the Liberal party.

Because of these differences in the wording of the resolution I hope the parliamentary secretary to Minister of Finance will give us a statement. Indeed, I think the Minister of Transport and the Minister without Portfolio, the hon. member for Winnipeg South, ought to have been here today to speak on this resolution and on this aspect of the matter.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I welcome the applause which I take it applies not only to the wish that these minister were here but to the idea that public ownership of this air line should continue. I regret that there did not seem to be any applause from the Liberal side of the house.

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): Hear, hear.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I am glad to see that the hon. member for St. Boniface and a few others have broken the spell and indicated they take the same position.

Mr. Mackasey: Perhaps the hon. member wants to know why I did not applaud his remarks. I did not particularly like his implication that the Minister without Portfolio from Winnipeg South could not act in an impartial manner with regard to any responsibilities given to him by the government. The words were not characteristic of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. I do not think that type of implication ought to go unnoticed.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The hon. member for Winnipeg South and I are personal friends and what I said was not easy to say. But I think that when a man has had long connections with a privately owned air line business certain things ought to be said. Let me put it this way. A better choice could have been made of a man to conduct an impartial survey of the question as to what should be the ownership structure of the air lines industries in this country.

• (3:30 p.m.)

My second point relates to a matter which was again the subject of questions and answers on orders of the day this morning, that is, the position of the maintenance and overhaul base of Air Canada in the City of Winnipeg. The statement the Minister of Transport made this morning had a certain ring of reassurance about it. He told us on his own initiative that the former prime minister, Right Hon. L. B. Pearson, had made certain commitments to the City of Winnipeg and that those commitments still stand. But how long will they stand before they are implemented? This is a serious matter for Winnipeg, both in terms of the economy of the area and in terms of the employment of those who work at the base.

Negotiations seem to be going on. There appear to be talks about selling the operation there to some private company. The unions are concerned, but I find it is difficult for them to get into consultation with respect to this matter. To me, it is a shame that this kind of thing can be dragged on for so long, while in the meantime employees are forced to move or take other jobs. It has reached the point now where, when some of us ask that the maintenance and overhaul base be retained in Winnipeg, our friends in Montreal get up and suggest we are trying to take something away from Montreal which they think belongs to Montreal. I thought it was our base, and I think the government ought to move more quickly to get this issue settled on a satisfactory basis.

I join with others in expressing the hope that the question of the presidency of Air Canada will soon be settled. The delay is unfair to those who are concerned. It cannot but affect the morale of those who are running Air Canada that this long delay should take place with regard to filling the post which was occupied for so many years by Mr. Gordon McGregor, and I hope action will be taken soon.