

was done to ensure her comfort and safety on her way home. Those people were there when we got to the airport, and to this day some of them still ask.

• (1800)

This is a service that rises out of the corporation's involvement in the community, the fact that those people know their clientele and their clientele knows them.

Suddenly, 150 of those people, the ones who have the most direct contact with the public, are being told to move to Toronto, take early retirement, or lose their job. It is unfair. It is not right and it is not something that we in the Atlantic region want to put up with any longer.

Perhaps I was being naive in asking the Minister of Transport to help. Perhaps I was being naive to think that this government cares to create a transportation policy that is meaningful to all regions of the country. Perhaps I am naive to believe that this government really has eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to feel the concerns of people who live outside the central core of this country. If it does not hear soon, the voices will be louder and louder, and they will be knocking on the very doors of this Chamber.

Mr. Ross Belsher (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for again raising this important question. I am pleased to participate in this debate this evening.

The hon. member raises the issue of cuts in Air Canada's work force in Atlantic Canada. She suggests for some reason that the federal government should get involved in a matter that is the exclusive responsibility of a private sector corporation responsible to its shareholders. How does the hon. member expect the shareholders, management and the employees of Air Canada to respond to the federal government's interference in the day-to-day management of the corporation?

One of the fundamental reasons Air Canada and 15 other Crown corporations have been privatized by this government was so business and commercial decisions such as these could be made by the private sector

without the meddling of government and political interference such as that suggested by the hon. member.

The hon. member has suggested that deregulation has been a failure and has impacted on air travel in Atlantic Canada in a negative way. Informed opinion would beg to differ from her. The National Transportation Agency recently reported that in 1989 aviation activity was 20 per cent higher in Atlantic Canada in terms of passengers and air carrier activity than it was in 1985 pre-deregulation. That means more choices for consumers, more options for air carriers, and more business for the transportation, hospitality, tourism and general business community in Atlantic Canada and throughout the country.

The hon. member will recall that the special parliamentary committee examining the Canada-U.S. air services agreement was in Halifax just two weeks ago. During those hearings the Atlantic Provinces Transportation Commission said that economic deregulation of the aviation industry had benefited the Atlantic region significantly.

The commission reported that deregulation has led to greater frequency of flights, better schedules, more fare options, and superior service with the type of aircraft that are better suited to the short haul nature of the regional market.

The commission told the committee that the Canadian airline industry was second to none in the world and that it wanted Canadian carriers to be able to decide what markets they wanted to serve without having to go back and forth to the government every time they wanted access to a new city in Atlantic Canada and throughout the domestic and Canadian-U.S. markets.

Joseph Randall of Air Nova told the special committee that his company has been tremendously successful under deregulation. He was most enthusiastic about the potential of his airline in a more liberalized Canada-U.S. environment.

Don MacInnes, the Minister of Transportation and Communications for the Government of Nova Scotia, told the committee that deregulation has led to excellent local service with the establishment of Halifax as a regional hub in Atlantic Canada.