

Government Orders

Why would the government now want to keep all the facts from the public? Is it that it discovered that many of its own friends were involved in the deal? It was not just Tories in the Paxport consortium but apparently Liberal supporters in Claxton Properties Limited and in Paxport.

That gives us a possible motivation for the government wanting to pay compensation but not make it public. The Leader of the Opposition spelled it out very clearly in his discourse in the Chamber on April 26. I completely agree with his analysis of the situation but in the end he recommends that a royal commission be established to get at the truth.

• (1135)

We agree that the facts must be made public. How is that best done? A royal commission would cost millions of dollars and would drag on for months or even for years if we go by previous royal commissions. Why not use the existing apparatus of government, specifically the Standing Committee on Transport? If the House chooses we could strike a select special committee of the House to investigate what has happened and bring forward sufficient witnesses to fully expose this Pearson airport deal.

Here is an opportunity to give to the citizens of Canada some renewed faith in the institution of Parliament. They have lost a lot of faith in the political system and perhaps even in this House. They ask: "Why do we have Parliament if you cannot debate things fully and bring this out into the open?" Here is our opportunity. Address this to the people of Canada. Show them that we can have witnesses here and that we can expose every angle of what may be a dirty deal.

Whether it is a select special committee or the existing Standing Committee on Transport, such action of bringing in witnesses and exposing it all could accomplish the following four things for the country and for the House.

First, it would fully disclose to the public all of the facts of the case. Second, it could decide whether or not there are any legitimate cases warranting compensation and, if so, bring these out into the open. Third, such action could save the money that would be spent on a royal commission and that could be a lot of money. Finally, it could, perhaps would, restore some public faith in their Parliament.

In conclusion, I advocate that the House seriously consider completing the investigation into the Pearson airport deal through the existing Standing Committee on Transport or through a select special committee.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government thought that, by introducing Bill C-22 as a token of the political openness with which it wanted to deal with the controversial Pearson deal in Toronto,

the opposition would approve of the legislation. Who does the government think we are? The fact is that this piece of legislation covers up a straight case of partisanship and the complicity between the old federal political parties. To help our good friends to a few bucks, everything is possible.

I am probably not the first one to mention that this bill adds to the doubts and the questions we have and stresses the need to have a royal inquiry to get to the bottom of this whole deal once and for all.

On April 26, 1994, the Minister of Transport, not a Bloc member or a Reform member, but a member of the Liberal government, stated in this House and I quote:

Our government after careful examination of the agreements and the report by Mr. Robert Nixon—

Again, the government shows how open it is by appointing a good old Liberal friend and a former minister to conduct this review. That is the person

—who described a flawed process clouded by the possibility of political manipulation.

As if that was not enough, Mr. Speaker, the minister added:

A reliance on lobbyists, the backroom dealings, the manipulation of bona fide private sector interests and the lack of respect for the impartiality of public servants are absolutely unacceptable.

• (1140)

And if we add the millions or rather the hundreds of millions of dollars at stake, we have all the ingredients needed for a real political scandal.

I think we ought to call this Pearson contract the now famous Pearson deal. We must have a royal inquiry to shed some light on this issue and to bring to heel the lobbyists and politicians who do not seem to care about public funds. However, the Liberal government, after careful examination of the ins and outs of this deal, is now realizing that the old chums of the Liberal Party as well as the long-time followers of the Conservative Party were all involved in this thing. And now it has a problem.

What do the Liberals do? They introduce this piece of legislation in this House, hoping that it will pass surreptitiously or that the Opposition will be completely hoodwinked. However, it is thanks to the vigilance of the Bloc Québécois that were brought to light these dubious actions, which we have been discussing for a few days.

The voters are sick and tired of the political scheming, which allows the rich to fill their pockets while, by osmosis, the taxpayers or the middle class are going broke. At the federal level, everything is bigger, larger, more complex. Budgets, spending, partisanship, scandals, everything is ten times bigger, undoubtedly in the name of the Canadian unity.

Well, yes, handouts must be made to those who will stand up for our beautiful and great country when the time comes. Money