

*Air Canada*

with the other airlines. Therefore, the Hon. Member is putting his priority on concern about whether there is fair competition between Air Canada and other airlines, and has set aside the long established concern about why we have an Air Canada and what public purpose it serves. That is now a secondary consideration.

The public policy reasons for the creation of Air Canada still exist today. The fundamental reason why I am raising this question about whether there continues to be a public policy reason for having Air Canada is because we want to ask the question: "Why is the Government selling off Air Canada?" One of the crucial questions is whether the Government is correct when it states that there is no longer a public purpose for having Air Canada owned in the public sector as a public utility.

The original reason for the creation of Air Canada, which is still valid today, is that there was a need for transportation in this country. There was a need to tie and knit this country together. This fundamental purpose and reason applies not only to air transportation and therefore to the existence of Air Canada, but it also applies and has applied throughout Canadian history. It applied when the Trans-Canada Highway was built. When the time came to build the Trans-Canada Highway we did not ask if this could be done by the private sector, or if we build a highway from one coast to another would we be competing unfairly with the private sector railroad by building a highway on which trucks could run? We did not say that. We said that it is important to tie this country together. It is important to have a Canada. One of the ways we can build Canada is by having good transportation and communication systems.

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The public purpose for having an Air Canada is to tie this country together, not only the big cities but also the small and remote communities. We want to tie those communities together through modern transportation means, air transport. This reasoning convinced Governments in the past, as it should convince the Government today.

One of the ways we created Canada was by building a railroad to tie the nation together from coast to coast. Not only did the vast majority of Canadians accept the persuasiveness of the argument that there is a public purpose to having a railroad and a transportation system to knit the country together, but the Conservative Party of the day, the political ancestors of the dinosaurs that we have across the way now accepted that reasoning. In fact, it was Sir John A. Macdonald who articulated the dream and said that we want to give birth to a new country in the northern half of the North American continent. One of the crucial instruments for the building of the nation was a transportation system. In that day it was the railroads, but Sir John A. had the foresight and vision to see that there was a job of nation building to be done and that that job was a job for the public sector. That fundamental reason

still exists today. It applies not only to railroads and to highways but to airlines and air transportation.

This Government has embarked on the Americanization of Canada. It is trying to reduce the nation to a market-place, to a bazaar, to a shopping centre, to a pale reflection of the American dream. The Government has abandoned the Canadian dream started by the Conservative Party and by Sir John A. Macdonald. It is not enough to be simply concerned about whether there was fair competition between this airline company and that airline company. That is a legitimate concern. Nobody wants unfair competition, a concern which the Minister expressed. It is also necessary to be concerned about public purpose, about nation building. That is where our Party stands. Our Party is concerned about the building of Canada, about the holding together of the country, about people in small communities who are a part of this nation as well as those who live in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. We are concerned about nation building.

We say that Air Canada like the railroad and the Trans-Canada Highway has been a part of the building of this country. This successful public enterprise ought to continue to be a part of that. We should not put a price tag on everything. We should not say that you can only have service if you have enough dollars in your pocket, that your community will be a real part of this country as long as it can pay its way. We are all Canadians. It is reasonable and necessary that we have a national air transportation company that can use some of its profits from the populous areas of the country on the lucrative air transportation routes to subsidize transportation to some of the more remote parts of Canada. All Canadians should share the burdens and costs of providing communications.

The reason for establishing Air Canada was to knit the country together, to play a part in nation building, and that reason continues to exist today. To abandon Air Canada suddenly just because the Conservative Party has abandoned its own philosophical roots and has chosen to go down the route of American conservatism, down the road of worshipping the market-place above all else, is a mistake. The fundamental conclusion we come to is that there is a purpose in nation building for having Air Canada in the public sector. If there is a public purpose for having Air Canada so that air transportation can contribute to the strength of this nation, why is the Government seeking to sell Air Canada? Is it because there is a public demand for it? Have citizens from one coast to the other risen in unison to say "Sell Air Canada"?

The other day the Government managed to dig out of its files some place one public opinion poll which seemed to indicate that the majority of Canadians would favour the sale of Air Canada. Let me point out that I have read numerous public opinion polls reported in the daily press in Canada which indicate that a majority of Canadians favour Air Canada remaining in the public sector. I see no evidence of a public demand for the sale of Air Canada. There is a public purpose for Air Canada to stay in the public sector. There is no clear evidence that Canadians as a whole are beating on the