

Adjournment Debate

successful than another is based on its ability to compete at that time.

This nation has experienced the trauma of recession. It is now on the upturn and our collective economic future is brighter today than it has been for years. Simply witness the report of Statistics Canada that shows, our inflation rate to be 5.5 per cent, the lowest it has been in ten years. Over the past year, however, we have seen a cutback in Government spending resulting in a percentage drop in this spending to most Provinces across Canada.

Madam Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the Hon. Member but his time has expired.

● (2320)

THE ADMINISTRATION—USE OF EXECUTIVE AIRCRAFT BY MINISTERS. (B) STATUS OF PASSENGERS ON FLIGHT TO ANTIGUA

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Madam Speaker, my purpose tonight is to review and consider the questions I raised on June 6 and June 7, 1983, concerning the use of the Government's executive jets by the Minister of State for International Trade (Mr. Regan). Let me quickly explain that that Minister who represents the constituency of Halifax has also held in the past the portfolios of Secretary of State, a Minister of Labour and was also the Cabinet Member in charge of Fitness and Amateur Sport. I do not want to create any confusion with the various titles. We are talking about the Hon. Member for Halifax (Mr. Regan). Let me begin by stating categorically that I recognize a legitimate need for air services to Members of the Cabinet and other Government officials under proper circumstances. The Government for that very purpose keeps a fleet of planes, three JetStars and other aircraft in order to provide these kinds of necessary special services.

What I want to stress and underline tonight is that there is a limit and a point at which there is not legitimate use of these aircraft, and I think everybody now agrees that the Minister of State for International Trade has gone beyond that limit. He has taken unto himself the right to use these aircraft in a manner which most people would not find proper.

What in specific terms the Minister has done, just to give two examples, is, first, he took a jet aircraft to Vancouver for a meeting and stopped on his return at Denver, Colorado, to attend a World Cup ski meet. On another occasion the Minister took a jet and went to Antigua, stopping in West Palm Beach, Florida, to pick up in-laws, Mr. and Mrs. Golightly. I am not going to stress these points because they are a matter of public record reported across the country and most people have condemned this activity. It is not only my view, and I want to emphasize that. I am not here to wreak a vendetta on my colleague from Nova Scotia, the Minister of State for International Trade. We share streets within the City of Halifax, Dutch Village Road and Main Avenue. I am here on behalf of the people of Nova Scotia and indeed the people of Canada to point out that we cannot accept this kind of behaviour. We are not alone. There is condemnation from the *The Mail-Star* in Halifax to the Vancouver newspapers. All are agreed that the Minister has overstepped the bounds of proper

practice and proper procedure. Let me quote some of the things that have been written, Madam Speaker. On June 3, 1983, the *Calgary Herald* wrote:

International Trade Minister Gerald Regan has clearly abused the privileges of his office and interpreted the guidelines for use of Government jets in a manner which insults the public purse.

That is not me writing as the Hon. Member from Halifax West. That is the Editor writing for the *Calgary Herald*. Then we read in the *Vancouver Sun*, which was carried from coast to coast:

Federal Transport Minister Jean-Luc Pepin would have done better not to have said anything at all than be drawn into a defence of his high-flying colleague, International Trade Minister Gerald Regan.

Then we come to the *Toronto Star*, a paper not unknown for sympathy toward the Liberal Party, which wrote:

International Trade Minister Gerald Regan once had this observation about the federal government's seven-passenger Lockheed JetStar executive aircraft: "Not as comfortable as flying first class on Air Canada, but better than economy.

Papers are unanimous right across the country in the condemnation of this activity by the Minister of State for International Trade. This condemnation not only extends to the use of the JetStars because we find an article in the *Toronto Sun* for June 3, 1983, which points out the looseness in the administration of expense accounts. There are also articles in *The Globe and Mail* that one can read which state that Cabinet expense accounts lack detail. Their articles refer specifically to the expense account of the Hon. Minister of State for International Trade, particularly on the very trip to Antigua.

In this connection I ask Hon. Members to take a look at *The Globe and Mail* for May 31, 1983. What I am here to complain about and what I indicated in my questions is that something has to be done about this activity. We just cannot sit here and accept this as the standard behaviour. We have to move, Madam Speaker. My suggestion is that the Government move immediately to establish proper rules governing the use of executive aircraft by Cabinet Ministers. The Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) has said in this House, and it is repeated in an article which appeared on June 3, 1983, in *The Chronicle Herald*, that the Minister of State for International Trade must justify his use of the flights. The standard is your own personal code of conduct. We have found out that that is not good enough. We have to have an objective code of conduct. We have to have it legislated. The Government has to say what Ministers are allowed to do and what they are not allowed to do. It is not good enough to have these executive flight operational rules promulgated by the Deputy Minister of Transport which indicates the circumstances under which Government jets can be used. We cannot have this inane flying over the country, taking one's family hither and yon, stopping in London to let off one's wife and going on to Calgary, costing taxpayers thousands of dollars. We have to impose a standard on ourselves, on Cabinet and on everyone who feeds at the public trough. Everyone who benefits from the public purse has to observe the same standard, and that standard has to be