

Government Orders

Of course the Bloc would like the government to present a bill on lobbyists; we will support any measure that would determine the scope of their work. Contrary to what the member for Broadview—Greenwood said this morning about there being Bloc lobbyists one day, Quebecers elected 54 lobbyists and they are all here in the House defending the interests of Quebec, day after day, openly and publicly. That is transparency.

Besides, several members from the other side tend to agree with Bloc Quebecois members on that point. I will even mention one, and I am sure the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell will appreciate that greatly; I am talking of course about the member for York South—Weston who said repeatedly in this House during this debate that, and I quote: “There were a lot of backroom negotiations and much manipulation. There were a lot of payoffs”. It is in *Hansard*. I am sure my colleague will consult it the minute I finish my speech.

He added: “It takes a lot of audacity on the part of Mr. Bronfman and other principals in the Pearson Development Corporation to put forward a claim of close to \$200 million for compensation after all of the shenanigans that took place”. Finally, he said: “One could almost conclude that the activity bordered on the criminal. I have considerable respect for M. Nixon, but he conducted his investigation and prepared his report in private”. There you have it! That is why the Bloc has presented this amendment; its purpose is to shed light on the role played by lobbyists in this issue and not to settle the case of lobbying in Canada once and for all.

Therefore, as I said last week, it is very disturbing to see not only that this bill does not clarify the lobbyists’ role, but also that it hints that there is a deal somewhere. As colleagues in the Bloc Quebecois and Reform Party have said, there is an obvious contradiction between clauses 7 and 10. I repeat it for the information of my colleague who was not here last week when I made my remarks. Clause 7 states that no proceedings for damages can be instituted against the government or its representatives concerning Pearson airport. Clause 10 specifies that if the minister considers it appropriate to do so, the Governor in Council may enter into an agreement recommended by the Minister of Transport. Paragraph 10(3) specifies that such an agreement must be concluded within a month after passage of the bill.

• (1320)

What I explained last week, and I will conclude with that, is that people involved in that scheme are told not to worry, that they will not have to litigate and pay legal costs because the bill prohibits legal proceedings. On the other hand, they are told they only have to go to the Minister of Transport right away, make a deal with him, and Cabinet will ratify the deal. But they have to move fast because everything must be done within a month.

If the government took such care to include so many details in the bill, surely a deal has already been made. Otherwise, there would be no need to say it must be settled within a month. The evidence speaks for itself.

If we want to go to the bottom of this issue, and know once and for all what happened with these dealings, we need a royal commission of inquiry. I will repeat for the information of members opposite, we need it in order to know about the work of lobbyists involved in this scheme. Of course, this will teach a lesson to the government, at least we hope so, but we will also get relevant information that will enable us, in the near future, to pass satisfactory legislation to restrict and control lobbying.

Mr. René Laurin (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry, I was told that there was another speaker before me.

We cannot support Bill C-22, an Act respecting certain agreements concerning the redevelopment and operation of Terminals 1 and 2 at Lester B. Pearson International Airport.

Even if the purpose of this bill is to cancel an inadequate contract which, as Mr. Robert Nixon noted in his report to Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, was “arrived at with such a flawed process and under the shadow of possible political manipulation”, it sets cancellation conditions which, in our opinion, are just as irregular and make us think that they are the result of more political manipulation to protect friends of the party in power.

We must first ask the following questions: Why did the government want to change the management framework of Lester B. Pearson Airport? Was the airport losing money? On the contrary, in 1993, this airport made a profit of \$23 million, excluding revenues from renting Terminal 3. Did the government believe that the new consortium would offer customers better services at a lower cost? On the contrary, since the deal provides that, for air carriers, the costs would be raised from \$2 per passenger now to \$7 at the end of construction. And we know that carriers pass their costs on to passengers.

• (1325)

There was only one acceptable reason, and it was the implementation of the new policy on the future framework for the management of airports in Canada that was published by the Conservative government in April 1987. But there again, the Conservative government at the time departed from its own policy by entrusting the modernization of Terminals 1 and 2 of Lester B. Pearson Airport to a private consortium.

Indeed, the new policy on the future framework for the management of airports in Canada called for the implementation of the new approach chosen by Transport Canada; one of its two main thrusts was to emphasize the commercial orientation of airports, their possible contribution to economic development and their taking into account of local concerns and interests.