

Government Orders

The other place, I regret to say, in its majority decision to bring in these amendments has ignored the interest of Canadians. It has amended the bill so as, if we accepted those amendments, to force the dispute into the courts where no one in the House or in the other place would then have anything to say about them. Then it would be a matter for the courts to decide on legal interpretation and on argument how much the bill would be for Canadian taxpayers.

I am not prepared to run that risk. I hope a majority of my colleagues in the House and a majority of senators in the other place will not run that risk either.

One has to ask whether the Tory scheme all along was to ignore what was patently obvious in October 1993 and to set the scene to make one last snatch at the public purse. Quite a money grab it would be. If the majority of the other place perseveres and wins this case, this scheme could result in the biggest rip-off in Canadian history, \$445 million of taxpayers' money.

• (1545)

Mr. Speaker, I want to assure my friends through you that the government is not going to play Russian roulette with the Tory majority in the other place with half a billion dollars of Canadian taxpayers' money on the table. That is simply not an option.

This deal resembles what might have been done in a banana republic by a dying government during its last gasps. There is no doubt and I readily admit it that this bill is an extraordinary measure to bring before Parliament but I do not believe that anyone in their right mind would deny that this was an extraordinary deal and it has to be undone.

It is time to get on with the business of providing the country with a safe, efficient and affordable national airport system with Lester B. Pearson International Airport at Toronto at the centre of this hub.

It is time to get on with the future of Canada's largest and most important transportation facility and it is time that the Conservative majority in the other place recognized that Canadians understood that this was a bad deal and agreed that it has to be dealt with resolutely.

We intend to ensure that Canadian taxpayers are not going to get a \$445 million bill from the consortium and their friends in the other place.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all my colleagues in the House of Commons from all parties to join with us in sending a clear message to the Senate that Parliament will protect the interests of Canadians and that Bill C-22 must be passed without amendments.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans): Mr. Speaker, before I begin my speech, I would like to address a few comments to the minister before he leaves. I hope that he will find it in his code of ethics to hear what I have to say despite his busy schedule. I would like to address three points of his speech.

First of all, if it were not for the calendar in front of me confirming this is September 28, 1994, I could have sworn we were back in 1990, when the Liberal opposition in this House was criticizing former Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney for appointing new senators to ram the GST bill through the other place. An action considered offensive.

Now the shoe is on the other foot, with the Conservatives in the majority in the other place. The Liberals did make use of their majority in the Senate when the time came to oppose the GST bill. This is the first comment I wanted to make.

My second comment is that throughout the election campaign, the Bloc Québécois candidates stressed repeatedly—I know I did 250 times a day in my riding of Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans—the fact that Liberal or Conservative, it is one and the same. We have proof of that today in this debate and when we hear the minister's remarks about the Conservative majority in the other place.

The third comment I wanted to make concerns the answer the minister gave me when questioned in a meeting of the Standing Committee on Transport. He said I knew full well that as part of the Auditor General review process, all compensation granted could undergo scrutiny. I just want to point out to the hon. minister that all this auditing by the Auditor General takes place after the fact. After irregularities have been detected, the Auditor General tables three books confirming they took place, but nothing can be done about it. That is why the Bloc Québécois called for the creation of a royal inquiry commission that could have shed light on this whole matter.

• (1550)

The minister revisited this issue in his speech today and apparently said that various institutions would shed light on this but only after the fact, after compensation has been paid. Of course, if no compensation is paid, the problem vanishes.

On June 14, I addressed this House at the second reading of Bill C-22 and asked that a royal commission be mandated to shed light on the contract awarded to Pearson Development Corporation. I put all my heart and energy in that speech, because I really thought it was my last opportunity to sensitize the House to this deal which was, if not illegal, at least highly questionable.