

Supply

Mr. Caron: Mr. Speaker, really, my hon. colleague summed it up very well. A country is much more than a bank account, much more than an accounting report. That is what we want to do in Quebec and we hope to be able to do it soon. At that time, we will show the Reform Party that it can work, even with people like us who sound like daydreamers, because there comes a time when if you cannot dream, you die, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Raymond Bonin (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, some people may want to destroy the country, but it would be too easy to destroy the railway system in Canada at the same time.

Canadians were led to believe that Canadian National is an inefficient company that does not meet the needs of the people. After a bit of research, we would come to realize that CN is subject to Canadian legislation which prevents it from being competitive and from selling shares. When it needs capital, CN must ask banks or individuals for a loan, contrary to Canadian Pacific, which can sell shares under these circumstances.

But even without a level playing field, Canadian National was able to make some very important decisions. The company was criticized for building a tunnel which shortens the trip from Montreal to Chicago by 12 hours. First in line to criticize CN were its competitors.

Nowadays, it is easy to rise in the House of Commons and say: "We are against any measure taken to save Canadian National, only because we are against it". We must realize that the time when Crown corporations in difficulty could get cartloads full of money is over. We now have to be efficient and innovative. We already know that Canadian National can easily compete with Canadian Pacific. I am even convinced that it can do better than CP.

• (1700)

[English]

Another important point is that while CN has been investing large amounts in its infrastructure, CP has not been doing this. It is normal, faced with the challenge of having to invest in its infrastructure, that it would want to repeat history and say to government: "Sell us this company for a dollar. We assure you that if you let us take over this crown corporation for a dollar you will not lose any more money". Well those days are over. CN is a valuable company in spite of the pressures put on it by government. It is an efficient company. Its employees are the best in North America. They have indicated their interest in making CN work.

The Capreol Save Our Rail Committee has been formed in my riding of Nickel Belt. The northern route has been faced with the challenges that CP initially wanted to merge with CN. This is something that is almost an impossibility when we think of two competitors that have not been very good friends in the last many years.

The next option was to purchase CN for a song and a dance in the same way that the Quebec City transit system was purchased by a very prominent Canadian, and a fellow Sudburian I should mention. The story was I am told: "Sell it to me for a dollar and you will never lose a cent again".

I am an Air Canada retiree. I was a victim of privatization. I am now the best spokesman for Air Canada that one will find and it does not have to pay me to do it. I saw that company grow from a company that was harnessed and handcuffed by federal legislation.

[Translation]

When I was working at Air Canada, we had a suggestion program for employees. If a suggestion led to savings, we got 10 per cent. We had very good ideas as employees. The sad thing is that each time we had a good idea to make the company profitable, we were told that Canadian legislation does not allow Crown corporations to do these kinds of things.

So how can such a company compete on the international market? We know now that our competitors are not here in Canada but around the world. Global competition requires that CN be able to compete on an equal footing with CP, its competitor.

[English]

We have mounted a campaign in my riding with the assistance of the Capreol Save Our Rail Committee. This campaign will grow. Our message is that we are giving Canadians facts about the situation of CN. It is not an inefficient company. It is a good company and its employees are excellent. It is performing well and is presently making a profit in spite of government legislation.

I would like us to remember that the airline industry underwent exactly what is happening now in the rail industry. Let us not forget that CP Air was purchased by a smaller company named Pacific Western. At that time it wanted to merge with Air Canada and then it wanted to purchase Air Canada. It is history repeating itself.

What was the message of Canadians? The message was that we need competition in this country. We cannot have just one airline or one railroad because the shippers will be forced to pay the fees required of them.

Our message to Canadians from the Capreol Save Our Rail Committee is: Privatize CN. The employees are signing cards indicating their willingness to participate in such a move. They want to do this because they know that as long as CN is a crown corporation other companies will want to take advantage of its good position. The best people who are in a position to take advantage of the good position of CN are the employees. Therefore, we are pushing for an employee led privatization of CN much like Air Canada did.