

Statistically, it is interesting to note that today, in spite of a number of moves by the Government, including this latest one to privatize Canadair, there is now more federal public ownership than ever before in Canadian history as a result of Petro-Canada expanding into the service station industry. On the one hand there is a Government which as a result of its own initiatives has expanded the federal role in the economic sector of the country, particularly through the expansion of Petro-Canada, and on the other hand it is giving the impression or the illusion that it is reducing the amount of public ownership. I just want to put that fact on the table, so to speak, before we continue so that while we might be giving impressions in the House of Commons today the facts will speak for themselves.

I wish to indicate that we New Democrats oppose this legislation for a number of reasons. I will comment on only three of them this morning. The first is that when one looks carefully at what is going on it seems that what we are discussing today is a role toward privatization in the absence of any clear program, plan or strategy for privatization. When we have 233 provincial Crown corporations in existence and 464 federal Crown corporations I do not think there is anyone who would say that we must automatically expand those numbers. In fact, no one would say that an evaluative process over time probably makes a great deal of sense in terms of ensuring that these corporations under public ownership make sense, that they continue to fulfil the roles for which they were intended. Just to make it perfectly clear, we have no opposition to the consideration of the role of various public Crown corporations. To blindly flail ahead and privatize for the sake of privatization, or for the sake of appeasing some radical right wing fanatical back-benchers in the Conservative Party, does not make any sense.

A few years ago Canadians were given an impression. When Ministers of the Crown or when political leaders in the Progressive Conservative ranks make certain comments people assume that they are telling the truth. I recall a statement made on August 27, 1984 by the Hon. Member for Etobicoke Centre (Mr. Wilson), who is the present Minister of Finance. He said the following regarding the Canadian aerospace industry:

As taxpayers we have a large investment in Canadair and de Havilland. Our objective is to get our money's worth for this investment, in terms of employment, sales and development.

We will set up a separate Crown corporation for Canadair and de Havilland with a mandate for the development of the aerospace industry and not merely financial control. This organization will be responsible for developing in conjunction with the aerospace strategy so that Canadair and de Havilland will become commercially viable and will continue to be so into the next century.

We will increase aerospace expertise in this new corporation so that the management are not merely bureaucratic financial wizards but people with hands-on experience and a thorough knowledge of the aerospace market.

● (1150)

I recall hearing the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) making that statement. It seemed to me at the time that he was making a commitment to Parliament and the people of Canada that the Government planned to continue on with the

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public ownership of both Canadair and de Havilland. However, such is not the case. Now in 1986, a completely different approach is being taken.

Looking closely at the situation, I believe it was after the former Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion took over the responsibility of the concept of privatization that he, motivated by his extreme political, financial and economic right-wing views, decided to proceed in the manner in which the Government is proceeding today. I do not think it was the original intent of the Government to move in this direction but, as on a number of other occasions, it appears to have changed its mind. The Government simply decided to expand its privatization initiatives simply for the sake of privatization.

Government Members are doing this so they can say to their more radical, extremist supporters, look what we have done, we have now privatized X, Y and Z public corporations. Look at the wonderful job we have done. This is being said, keeping in mind that we have more public ownership in the federal sector today than there has ever been. Again, I see this Bill as being a political, extremist tool.

A second reason that we will oppose Bill C-25 is that as far as we can make out this is not a sound financial decision. If all Members of the House were to identify sectors of the Canadian economy in which there will inevitably be growth, development, progress, job creation and the development of expertise in the future, there is no question that the aerospace industry would be one of them.

Because you are a student of Canadian politics and history, I know you, Mr. Speaker, would recall the Avro Arrow fiasco. This occurred at another time in history when Canada was just on the edge of developing into a world-scale player in the aerospace industry. The Progressive Conservative Government of the day said that it had a better idea. It wanted to scrap the Avro-Arrow plan. In a sense, it wanted to torpedo any effort on the part of Canada to develop in the aerospace industry. Perhaps "torpedo" is the wrong word to use in that sentence. Nevertheless, the reality is that the Government of the day made an interventionist decision that set back the development of Canada's aerospace industry for decades.

Just in the last number of months we were beginning once again to build up this leading technology. Canadians are being recognized around the world as being significant and major players in this very critical field of the future. What is the Government doing now? It is backing out of the commitment it made to the people of Canada through the present Minister of Finance back on August 27, 1984, to continue playing some role in the development of this technology.

For a Government to play some role in the development of the aerospace industry is nothing new. As a matter of fact, every single country around the world that is developing an aerospace industry, with the exception of one, is doing so in co-operation with the Government of that particular country. The one exception is the United States of America. West Germany,