

National Transportation Act, 1986

We suggest that Air Canada is a profitable and well administered corporation. It was awarded in the past on several occasions a number of international prizes. We believe that this Crown corporation, especially in view of the great concentration which seems now to happen in the air transportation industry, ever since the government implemented its deregulation program—it is becoming more than ever essential for the Government to retain, through its own Crown corporation, a vehicle to provide services, maintain and even further develop services in some regions which would be completely abandoned by the private sector which would concentrate its operations in the most lucrative centers in the central regions of Canada where the costs of operation are lower and which are more densely populated.

I said a moment ago that Canada is a country with a small population scattered over an immense territory. Air transportation is therefore a necessity for many Canadians, and not only for travelers but also to move goods to people who need them in remote areas. Air Canada, a Crown corporation, is essential in the new context of deregulation, because the Government will have a company to provide transportation services to those remote areas.

Of course, this may not be the opinion of the Government and of the Conservative Party. Tories want to privatize all Crown corporations. The Government does not believe in regional development. It is not aware of all those essential services remote areas need.

That is why we fear that Air Canada will be sacrificed for the sake of deregulation and privatization.

I will conclude with a word of warning. The battle the Minister had to fight to get Bill C-18 through is nothing compared to what he should expect if he ever tries to privatize Air Canada. We are going to oppose such an initiative systematically and relentlessly, because we think that public interest dictates that we keep this Crown corporation.

● (2100)

[English]

Mr. Malone: Mr. Speaker, I have had the privilege of listening to my friend, the Hon. Member for Papineau (Mr. Ouellet), for some two hours. He has been very successful in turning off every television set on the parliamentary channel. I simply want to ask if he intends to make us numb on both ends in this exercise he is going through?

[Translation]

Mr. Ouellet: Mr. Speaker, I believe I have had the opportunity to give not only my point of view, but also the point of view of all my colleagues in the Liberal caucus, and to say that we are deeply concerned with this hectic, hasty and thoughtless deregulation process by the Conservative Government.

In the few moments which I have been able to use, I have not only given the views of the Liberal caucus, but also acted as the spokesperson for countless Canadians who do not approve of that decision by the Government, and in particular thousands of Canadian workers in the transportation sector who feel that their jobs are threatened by Bill C-18. I have been very pleased to be able to put that disagreement on the record on their behalf, for the Government has proceeded with such haste, has refused to let the Parliamentary Committee travel to all those areas of the country, all the cities, all the villages which requested hearings of the Transport Committee, which would have liked the Committee to visit them and hear their views.

I wish Members from both sides of the House had been able to travel throughout the country to listen to what the people have to say about this Bill. Since that was not possible, I have tried tonight in their name to exercise the privilege of an Opposition Member who feels frustrated, thwarted, and stifled by this Government which has restricted the time for this debate, I have tried at least, as I said, to convey the disagreement not just of one person, but of a very large number of Canadians throughout the country.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Darryl L. Gray (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine): Mr. Speaker, now that we have heard all the speeches by the Members of the NDP and the Official Opposition, and I am thinking of the Hon. Member for Papineau (Mr. Ouellet), I think we can say that today in the House, and I say this as a junior Member of Parliament who was elected in 1984, that two hours of the precious time of Canadians have been wasted, listening to the foolishness we have just heard from the Liberal Party. Mr. Speaker, as politicians from every part of this country, we feel this is a disgrace.

We have had some very serious messages from NDP Members who told us they were against the Bill and against deregulation.

As usual, the Liberal Party told us it was for but then again it was against. And it took the Hon. Member two and a half hours to put his case.

Mr. Speaker, as a very good Conservative, I would like to take at least five or six minutes to give you some idea of what the Government, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Transport and our Transport Committee have been doing.

● (2110)

[English]

For the people who have been listening this afternoon, I think it is important that we understand what has been going on for 20 years. We listened to the Official Opposition for the 16 years when it formed the Government. It did absolutely nothing for our transportation sector. We have taken charge