

*Government Orders*

We know that once the government washes its hands of something, it washes its hands of any sense of responsibility for the well-being of the employees who have served it admirably over many years. I do not think the employees of airports can expect much better from this government if this bill passes as it stands.

We also have to be concerned about the transfer of enforcement of safety regulations and security at airports. All those matters need to be taken care of within this bill so that the government's responsibility for the national interest and the interest of the public remains clear and paramount.

We have to be concerned as well about a national approach to services that have linked this country together for many years. We have to be concerned not only about those wealthy airports where there is a profit to be made and where there is an interest in local authorities in taking them over to achieve that profit. We have to be concerned as well, though, about the whole network of airport services in this country; about those small airports that serve smaller communities that are not viable or not profitable but nonetheless are an important service to people who live in the many corners of this country.

We have accepted a principle that we share the responsibilities for making certain that people in all parts of Canada have an appropriate level of services such as transportation and communications services. We have always recognized that there are some parts of that network of service and links in communication that are profitable and some that are not. Where it is possible by the massive population and services to generate a profit, that goes back into the total system, the network helps to pay for those parts of the country which are less profitable and cannot pay their own way simply because of the sparsity of population, distance, and so on.

I am deeply concerned about what happens to those far-flung communities of our country when they are no longer part of a national network in which there is an opportunity to balance expenditures and revenues and to make sure that everybody gets the service they deserve.

I want to speak briefly about the impact on employees because it is an important part of our approach as the Official Opposition to dealing with this bill. We have said that it is incumbent upon this government to ensure that the employees of the airport affected by the transfer

decision are not caught in the crossfire of the government's policy. We are concerned about preserving the collective bargaining rights of individual members affected by the transfer. Frankly, the provision in the bill that the collective bargaining rights end with the end of the next contract is not really very satisfactory. Many of the contracts of Public Service employees with their employer are under negotiation right now.

We are concerned about the loss in bargaining power by employees or their right to stand up for hard won benefits which they have gained over many years. It is a right that they have now as members of the Union of Canadian Transport Employees, a union of 12,000 members. If, for instance, the Edmonton airport were to be transferred to a local authority, the membership would be reduced to roughly 125 employees, clearly drastically reducing bargaining power.

Bill C-85 does not satisfy the conditions that we feel are necessary to protect the well-being of employees. Such things as job security and service to the public are things which public servants are interested in providing. Pension benefits are of great concern to the employees as well.

We have all seen how uncertain things are if we rely on the goodwill of the government. Certainly the CN Express employees have seen how the pension benefits they have contributed to throughout a working life can disintegrate if they rely on this government to protect their interests.

We are concerned—this Chamber has heard this before—about the applicability of the Official Languages Act and the number of ways in which this act would not apply to local airport authorities if this bill remains unchanged.

This is part of a general concern about the government's commitment to implementing national policies on a national basis. We have some concern about how the government will ensure that Canadians, wherever they live and wherever they travel, are entitled to a standard of service determined by their national government.

We are concerned about travellers coming to this country and gaining a good impression of Canada no matter at what airport in the country they happen to land. Yet it seems to me that under Bill C-85 local authorities would be free to adopt whatever criteria,