

*Government Orders*

opportunities develop, strictly because we have been able to improve our direct air transportation with cities in the United States. Of course, that is not to mention the opportunity to go to Las Vegas. I mean just to go south and gamble it. Life is a gamble enough, but with opportunities like that we must be prepared.

• (1640)

I want to talk a little bit, if I may, about the carriers and their employees. Let us look at the real wrecker of the Canadian airline industry. This is the industry that has encouraged us to open up the bilateral agreement and that has said to us we want to be able to go and compete, we need to be able to expand, and we do have the ability to compete. This is the same industry that we heard such terrible things about deregulation.

I recognize that the regional carriers, particularly, have had problems. Some of them are facing some tough times right now with the increase in the price of fuel. But it was with deregulation, we were told, that we would see a constriction of air travel, particularly in the regions. I need not remind hon. members about my own part of the country where everybody preached doom and gloom and that all the airports would be closed down.

I just want to put a few facts on the record. Among the top 146 domestic city pairs, which account for almost 90 per cent of air traffic in Canada, the proportion serviced by two or more competing carriers rose from 44 per cent in 1983 up to 77 per cent. That is with deregulation. The number of people flying from Cambridge to Waterloo is up from 44 per cent to 77 per cent in that they have two airlines. Among the top 42 communities in the network where about 95 per cent of domestic passengers originate or terminate their travel, all had at least two scheduled carriers in 1989 and half of them were served by five or more airlines.

We have seen the development of hubs and spokes. We have seen the development of competition. Passengers have options in terms of airlines, types of service, cost, frequency, and that sort of thing. It is important. The number of domestic city pairs with direct, meaning non-stop, or indirect, meaning same plane, service increased from 1,088 in 1983 up to 1,729 in 1989. That is up by about 60 per cent by my calculations.

In the top 25 domestic city pairs, the number of direct and indirect flights doubled between 1983 and 1989. This trend was applicable similarly in all regions of the country.

We are talking about the increased level of competition. If there is competition, the consumer benefits. The increased level of competition in the domestic airline industry has seen a broader selection of prices and services.

I have talked so much about central Canada and the cities of Hamilton and Cambridge, but it is important to talk a little about the Atlantic provinces. In Atlantic Canada, for 24 city pairs both jet and non-jet traffic has increased by over 30 per cent just since 1988.

That is two years. Even by my calculations, that is two years. Up 30 per cent. Direct flights in that region are up 25 per cent while indirect flights are up 61 per cent. The total seats available in the sample city pairs increased by 22 per cent. So not only are we seeing an increase in choices, an increase in options and increase in exposure, but we are also seeing an increase in the availability of spaces through all of this process as well. This was after we were told time and time again they are going to close down Deer Lake, they are going to close down Stephenville, they are going to close down Gander, it will not exist any more.

Just to give one example of a regional airline. In St. John's when you go out for a flight at six-twenty in the morning, twenty minutes after six, which is ten to five here and in your home, Mr. Speaker, it is ten minutes to five which means that we get up at half past three in the morning to get here by nine o'clock. Now, that keeps the Whip happy. It keeps our staff working. It gets us in the office on time to get some work, but our options are much greater. I used to have basically one choice, you came up in the morning or you came up at night.

If I have the opportunity to sleep in once a year or twice a year, I can come up at noon. I have two choices at three o'clock. This is the old schedule. I could come at two-thirty or I could come at three-fifteen and I got here by six o'clock. If I got a good taxi driver, I could be here for the vote and the Whip would never know I was gone. Or I can leave at five-twenty-five. Now granted I have to spend one hour and fifty minutes in the airport in Halifax, but I used to see my friend from Gander—Grand Falls. He would be coming through. I do not know