

*Contract for Airport Taxi Service*

I would like to refer to an episode which occurred since this motion was first made. I refer to an announcement by the taxi firm that holds the monopoly contract from this government, which has already stated that under the new department of consumer affairs they are going to see that the full play of the marketplace maintains the lowest possible prices on behalf of the Canadian consuming public. The Canadian consuming public uses taxi services throughout Canada and, incidentally, it is amazing the number of monopolies granted in one way or another by branches of the government. In this instance the monopoly contract holder, out of the goodness of his heart, announced that he was going to allow independent taxi operators in the city of Ottawa to participate in the business that originates at that station. He said that at certain hours of the day he would allow them to carry passengers from the station as they wished.

I say it is to the credit of the operators of the independent taxi services in Ottawa that they refused to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for the monopoly contractor for the taxi service from the Ottawa railway station. If there were periods of time under his contract when the number of passengers offering was not sufficient to reimburse the monopoly contract holder, the independent cab drivers were certainly not going to hang around the Ottawa station, even though it appeared that a great, generous move had been made by allowing them to pick up fares at the station at times when the contract holder figured there was not much money to be made.

It is interesting to learn that the independent taxi operators of Ottawa—I admire them and I believe they should be given a fair shake in all the business that is available and not be restrained by a monopoly contract granted by the government or any crown corporation or any government operated division such as the C.N.R. in their search for business—refuse to pick up passengers at the station who seek to make use of their independent cabs when there is no contract holder's cab present. This is to their credit. The independent operators maintain, and they are correct, that the contract holder does not have enough cabs to give the kind of service that the C.P.R. and C.N.R. have been demanding or that the Ottawa railway station demands. Therefore, to try and pull his chestnuts out of the fire he told the independent operators they could pick up passengers hanging around the station waiting for one of his cabs.

I maintain that the government should not be granting monopolies, and particularly should not grant monopolies and then talk about how it is going to cut the price of everything by allowing free competition in the marketplace to keep prices low.

In bringing up this question of the Ottawa railway station where there is a contract holder for the taxi service, I was thinking primarily of the airports throughout the Dominion of Canada where monopoly franchises are granted for what are called passenger limousines, not taxis, because if they were taxis they would have to be licensed by the local municipalities through which they run, at least in the province of Ontario. To evade that restriction they are called limousines and do not have to secure a taxi licence in the municipalities in which they operate.

Here in Ottawa it is interesting to note that the Ottawa Transportation Commission which operates the buses throughout the city is operating buses to and from the station. In my opinion it is a rather limited service, limited in that they have signs at the station announcing when the buses call, I believe about 15 minutes apart, whereas in other metropolitan centres such as Toronto and Montreal buses serving the local railway stations are going by every few minutes. But the Ottawa Transportation Commission has been given the right to operate its buses right to the station.

I do not know how many hon. members have noticed, but at the Ottawa railway station the taxi cab company having the franchise to give the service has the inside track, and I am not joking. There are two openings there for traffic, and the taxis have the inside track right beside the station doors. But if you want to use the buses of the Ottawa Transportation Commission you have to thread your way through the taxis over to the second lane and there get into one of the buses. I never saw a system so set up where passengers were almost forced to use the monopoly contractor rather than a publicly owned transportation system.

At Malton airport, Toronto, Toronto Transportation Commission buses are not even allowed into the area where the passengers are coming in from the planes. There the Toronto Transportation Commission is given the opportunity of putting buses in the basement of the building. In reply to a question which I asked some time ago about the Toronto Transportation Commission bus service to Malton airport I received a very trite