

Government Orders

We demand a royal commission of inquiry. The Nixon investigation was conducted in private. In the red book, the Liberals say that people are irritated because key parts of public business are conducted behind closed door.

The government keeps harping on about transparency. Here is a chance to show us they believe in their principles and can apply them responsibly.

A government that preaches transparency has to shed some light on this whole issue. Taxpayers have the right to know and to be provided with inside information on these transactions. The government cancelled the privatization plan, yet this bill provides for compensation, although the parties were aware of a possible contract cancellation.

• (1540)

The Crown does not have to compensate investors for miscalculations. Clause 10, paragraph 2, reads as follows:

No amount is payable under an agreement entered into under this section in relation to (a) any loss of profit, or (b) any fee paid for the purpose of lobbying a public office holder, within the meaning of subsection 2(1) of the *Lobbyists Registration Act*, in connection with any agreement.

It has to be stronger than that. Public funds are at stake.

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to denounce the doings of some politicians in this country. More particularly, I intend to denounce the almost incestuous practices which are part of the culture of some people who try every day to influence government decisions, using all the means at their disposal, from childhood friendships to services rendered, including election organizing and political party financing.

These people try to change the normal course of events, to trade the public interest for private gain and, sadly, to relegate to the background parliamentarians' role as their constituents' elected representatives. I therefore speak on this bitter taste left by Bill C-22, the uncertainties surrounding the privatization of Pearson Airport in which lobbyists, politicians, former senior civil servants and friends of the government seem to be involved.

The Pearson Airport issue is worth considering, beyond Bill C-22. The government is wrong in refusing to clear up the whole matter. By simply clamping a lid on it while clause 10 would pay generous compensation set in secret and at its discretion, without consulting parliamentarians, the government is showing the people of Quebec and Canada its true colours, while its red book talked about a code of ethics for lobbying.

Has the powerful lobby around it made the government change its mind? If not, as I hope, the government has the ideal issue before it to show its good will, to set a new path in the

conduct of affairs of state and to give back to our fellow citizens a minimum of trust in their political leaders.

At a time when polls and all opinion surveys agree that the people mistrust and doubt their political leaders and hold them in low esteem, is it not worth confronting the old demons which haunt the halls and corridors of government and giving the people what they want: honesty, openness and the plain simple truth? The Pearson Airport issue is perfect for this exercise and I am convinced that, in a free vote, parliamentarians would listen to their conscience and go for transparency, legitimacy and restraint.

The government has the duty to hold a public inquiry on the privatization of that airport. By refusing to do so and not following the suggestion made by the Bloc Québécois, the government would not fulfil its responsibilities; it would renege on its election promises, and it would in fact endorse methods used by Conservatives. The government would merely replace a few beneficiaries.

As Mr. Nixon mentioned in his report, the privatization of Pearson Airport is an obvious example of political interference, irregularities and maneuvering. This is why, if the government has nothing to hide or to protect, the issue must be thoroughly examined and must stand as an example to ensure that such a situation does not occur again.

• (1545)

In 1987, when the federal government implemented a new management policy regarding Canadian airports, it did so mainly to involve local authorities in the development of airport sites. This was the case for Vancouver and Montreal, among others, where non-profit corporations manage airport facilities. In Toronto, the situation was very different, perhaps because Pearson Airport was the most profitable in Canada. In a context of freer trade, which is a sacred cow, the thinking goes like this: Why should the government keep a profitable venture when it can look after so many non-profitable ones?

Far from promoting public interest, the transaction took place in the midst of an election campaign, for the benefit of the only two bidders, former competitors now united to reap the profits. Paxport Inc., whose bid had been approved by the government without any prior financial analysis, was not able to come up with the funds necessary to conclude the transaction involving terminals 1 and 2. Paxport joins forces with Claridge Inc., which already controls terminal 3 via Pearson Development Corporation.

This merger produces T1 T2 Partnership. And there you have it! Pearson, which is a very profitable airport, is completely privatized for the benefit of a single group. The financial details of the deal are kept secret, but when reviewed by Robert Nixon and other Ontario investigators, they do not seem to be compatible with public policy. How many millions of dollars are we