

Government Orders

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to take part in the discussion on the cancellation of the contract to privatize terminals 1 and 2 at Lester B. Pearson International Airport in Toronto, a very profitable airport. The former Conservative government concluded these agreements only two and a half weeks before the election of October 25, 1993. They would have turned over to private sector interests for a 60-year period the development and operation of terminals 1 and 2 at the largest airport in Canada.

In the last election campaign, the Liberals promised to cancel this outrageous contract that by all appearances was a case of patronage and end-of-mandate political manipulation. Clearly, this questionable transaction is contrary to the public interest and the Conservative government's only purpose was to enrich its fund-raisers.

Some provisions of Bill C-22 are contradictory and controversial; for example, clause 9, which says that in principle the government will not have to compensate the parties concerned. However, further on, the bill gives the Minister of Transport full discretion to conclude agreements on payment of money, to pay these same parties the amount he deems appropriate under this law. I think that no compensation should be paid in this case. This latter provision is disturbing. It leaves the way open for lobbyists involved with the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party to obtain the compensation they want.

Furthermore, I very strongly support the proposal of the member for Lac-Saint-Jean, the Leader of the Official Opposition, to create a royal commission of inquiry to get to the bottom of one of the biggest scandals I have seen in Canadian public life and politics since coming to this country in 1974.

Obviously, there was no openness in this affair.

• (1040)

Even the investigator appointed by Mr. Chrétien, Mr. Nixon, says that: "The public should have the right to know the full details of the agreement". Besides examining this questionable transaction, this commission should also deal with the administration of all federal airports in Canada.

This transaction that the Conservative Party wanted to put through was condemned at the time by the labour movement, especially by my old union, the National Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers Union of Canada (CAW), by the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and by the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers. These unions also represent the employees of Pearson Airport.

Consequently, I want to pay tribute to the union movement for its clear and firm position against the privatization of that airport, and in particular to CAW president, my former colleague Basil "Buzz" Hargrove, as well as to Cheryl Kryzaniwsky, president of local 2213 of the same union, which represents 8,000 workers from that industry. I spent the last two days in Banff, close to your riding. I met with over 100 delegates from this local chapter representing airline industry employees. These people passed excellent resolutions to face the current crisis in this industry.

These unions opposed policies to privatize and regulate their sector of operation at any cost. For example, they opposed the privatization of Air Canada. Indeed, as a consequence of these policies, several Canadian and Quebec companies have gone bankrupt, thousands of jobs have been lost, and big American carriers are now exerting greater control over those companies which are still in operation.

I want to take this opportunity to draw your attention to the fact that TAP-Air Portugal will stop flying to Canada, that is to Montreal and Toronto, after doing so for 25 years. I was informed of that decision in the last couple of days by the CAW union, which represents employees of that company in Canada, and also by the Portuguese community, which is one of the largest ethnic communities in Canada with close to 500,000 members who reside mostly in Ontario and Quebec. Its leaders have formed a coalition and unanimously oppose that decision.

I therefore ask the Canadian government to make representations to the Portuguese government and to the management of TAP-Air Portugal, to have that decision reversed, because it could have a very negative impact for the travel industry between the two countries, and it will result in the loss of numerous jobs.

At Pearson Airport alone, 56,000 workers depend on direct and indirect airport activities. The annual total payroll for these workers is \$1.9 billion, an amount which greatly contributes to the economy of the Greater Toronto Area, including the \$630 million in taxes paid to the three levels of government. This gives an idea of the impact of that industry on Canada's economy.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I submit that any agreement of any nature must have, as one of its primary objectives, the protection of the rights and interests of workers.

[English]

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod): Mr. Speaker, I want to review some of the red book promises this morning.

The red book promised more integrity in government, it promised frugality, it promised to reduce perks and modify the MP pension plan, and change some of the Order in Council appointments. It talked about transparency in appointments. Appointments would be made to highly qualified people only. It talked about cleaning up patronage.