

be surprised if I say I resent most deeply that suggestion if it infers any misconduct on my part or on the part of the chairman of the Commission. I can assure him there is no such thing. There are very rare occasions upon which legitimate appeals against the findings of the Canadian Transport Commission have not in some way been dealt with, either through the Governor in Council or myself as Minister of Transport.

But as I said at the outset, we might also consider the other two elements introduced by the hon. member for Moncton which have to do with the role of Air Canada and Canadian National Railways. Here, once again, one can come back to the creation of Canadian National and read literally reams of declarations, but I think some of the wisest men who ever sat on either side of this House or represented any party in this House have constantly maintained a basic theme which continues in my judgment to be the view of the vast majority of the people of Canada; that is, that there should be a minimum amount of parliamentary intervention in respect of either of these Crown corporations and that there should be virtually no government intervention in the day-to-day operations of these corporations, except through the means provided by the Parliament of Canada, which of course in the case of Canadian National is in respect of only its operating and capital budget and in the case of Air Canada consideration of its capital budget. These are quite clear strictures and quite wise strictures which were placed long ago upon governments and parliaments dealing with these organizations.

The hon. member for Moncton made the comment that the chairman of the board of Air Canada indicated there was a need for a clear definition of the role of Air Canada in terms of its function as a Crown corporation and expressed his regret that the government or I had not been sufficiently precise. He was mildly critical of the fact that I said it took the best part of two years to define what that role was. The difficulty occurs simply because one has to walk an extremely narrow line between what constitutes government policy with regard to a Crown corporation, what constitutes the appropriate form or direction that should be given to a Crown corporation, and what constitutes interference. Having talked about the need for some definition of the role of Air Canada, the hon. member went on to demonstrate, perhaps better than I could, the kind of difficulty this creates. He talked about the reservations system and whether or not this should be changed. Is this something which should be written into the policy in respect of a Crown corporation? He talked about the levels of service being maintained in certain parts of the country. Is this a matter of policy? Is it appropriate that the government should say that services should be, for instance, increased or, conversely, whether some services should be decreased on a particular line?

I suggest it is indeed appropriate, as this Parliament has reiterated time after time, that it is not the role of the government and is certainly not the role of the Minister of Transport to indicate to either of these Crown corporations either one of these courses. Let me try to re-affirm or state what I believe it is appropriate to say in terms of the role of Air Canada. The government believes in the pre-eminent position of Air Canada as the major national carrier owned by the people of Canada and intends to see

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that this pre-eminence is maintained. I think the government is legitimate in seeing that adequate levels of service are provided for the people of Canada and that these services are on a par with those available in any other comparable area of the world; in other words, that Canadians are entitled to a very high level of service. Let me say parenthetically—and I believe there is adequate evidence to back this up—I believe Air Canada is today among the finest air lines in the world and that the great majority of Canadians are being served by Air Canada in a way comparable or better than people are served by the service provided in any other country of the world.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jamieson: When I travel abroad I find it is only in other countries that one hears the kind of comment I have made now. Perhaps we are too close to the forest, in a sense, to see the trees. The truth of the matter, however, is that Air Canada and the CNR are held up by people in other countries as good examples of a standard of service the public should have and, secondly—this applies to Air Canada—that there is no better organization of its kind in the world and that it is one of the safest. From this point of view I can say this is part of the policy we ought to give to Air Canada. On the basic question, I would simply repeat that what we say today has been said from the days when Air Canada had its beginning as Trans-Canada Air Lines. It is essentially a profit-oriented airline. This is the way it must continue because if it is not profit-oriented in the sense that its executives and its board of directors have some goal of that nature toward which they can work, then of course much of the initiative and drive would go out of the organization. Surely, it has been proven consistently throughout the history of this country that any carrier of a Crown corporation nature that is not designed to achieve a profit will not be a very successful organization.

So, I repeat that this is not simply something being created as of today and that in terms of government policy it has been part of the role of Air Canada from the days when it was created as Trans-Canada Air Lines. This does not mean that Air Canada should make a profit on every single one of its operations, or in fact should be free under its own auspices to withdraw from a particular service or reduce a particular service. It simply means in the totality of its operation that its main objective should be to operate like any other corporation in like circumstances.

Having said that I believe that Air Canada, as a corporation owned by the people of Canada, has a special responsibility to the people of Canada to ensure that services are provided in regions which are not at all times profitable on a particular leg, on a particular run, or whatever the case may be. They do have this additional responsibility. I think it is appropriate for a Minister of Transport to say this in terms of declaring what are the goals and objectives of Air Canada. Given these broad perspectives—I have not dealt with the international field because of the matter of time—it is my feeling that the chief executives and board of directors of these corporations should continue to be free to make this decision. I suggest that if hon. members opposite really think about this matter deeply they will realize that this is a thorough-