

Government Orders

federal government was responsible for the action. The federal government was responsible for the completely inadequate supervision when it privatized CN Route and left the workers out to burn, in some cases to lose their jobs, in many cases to face bankruptcy with the absolutely devastating effect on the families of those workers.

• (1720)

One of my concerns with this legislation is the fact that there are really no long-term guarantees that the same things will not happen with workers in various airports across this country.

We already have a situation where many local authorities are trying to privatize the work within their own communities. At the present time they have garbage collection done by employees of the city or the municipality or the local district. They are turning that over to private operators and as a result losing good paying work for that community.

What guarantee would employees at the various airports across this nation have that this would not happen to them, that as these new local owner-operators, these new municipal authorities take over, they will not in turn privatize these jobs, have them go out of the community in many cases, have them turned over to private operators, contract them out in such a manner that many of those jobs will become minimum wage jobs, with no benefits, no job security. If people try to unionize what will happen immediately is that the company will break up, form another company which will bid for the same job, have new employees and again pay minimum wage.

What guarantee do these workers have, what guarantee do these families have, that we will not have just another CN Route fiasco which has been perpetrated by the federal government, the Minister of Transport and all those uncaring people in the cabinet?

Mr. Angus: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. If we look at the past practices of the Department of Transport on the aviation side, we have a situation where in spite of our urging, the security of airlines is something that is left to the airlines to look after. They in turn contract it out to private security firms. We have urged the government to change that so

that security becomes a direct function of the Government of Canada. They have consistently said no.

I think that in the way that my colleague has laid it out, and because of the way of the bill is worded, that once the existing collective agreement has run its course, and the employees are no longer covered by that collective agreement and the provisions therein, unless we can make changes to the legislation, then I would say that there is no guarantee whatsoever of any permanency for those employees. That is not to say there is permanency within the federal Public Service, but all of a sudden we are into a non-union situation, a situation where a local authority is trying to find ways to reduce costs. Yes, they will look to contracting out. They will look to buying services from other agencies, perhaps one of the new management companies specializing in airport management.

Instead of the Government of Canada being the central agency running the airports at Toronto, Montreal, Thunder Bay, Winnipeg, Calgary and Vancouver, it will be company *x* or company *y* that will put in place its own bureaucracy. There are two differences. One is the employees at one end will not receive the same kind of treatment that they have been able to get under the auspices of the Government of Canada. Second, there will be a slice of the income obtained from you and I as passengers, and you and I as customers that will go not to the taxpayer, not the Minister of Finance to help run things, but as profit to those agencies and those companies who are providing services.

In summation, there is no guarantee, and we need the legislation changed.

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my hon. friend's comments. I understand where he is coming from.

I have just two points. I think we should not confuse privatization and turning airports over to local airport authorities. The whole idea behind it is to enable a local authority, made up of people from the region of Thunder Bay, for instance, to participate in the growth of the airport and the airport infrastructure.

By giving the local people an opportunity to do this kind of thing on a lease basis—not a sale or a purchase by somebody, where the hammer is still held by the federal government—they have to comply with the terms of the lease. They will be able to do that.