

Government Orders

In 1993, the Bloc Québécois, abiding by the Quebec law on the financing of political parties, was able to obtain \$3.3 million from its 113 000 donors, compared to approximately 30 000 donors to the so-called national parties. That means 113,000 individual donors whose donations were limited to \$5,000 each a year.

Our hands are free. With such numbers, how can the government claim to be completely free in its decision making process when it is tied to our country's financial establishment?

This Liberal government also received direct and indirect financial donations from friends of the party who are more or less associated with this contract. That is why we are requesting a public commission of inquiry.

As Mr. Nixon himself said in his private inquiry report: "Failure to make public the full identity of the participants in this agreement"—once again the lobbyists bill—"and other salient terms of the contract inevitably raises public suspicion. Where the Government of Canada proposes to privatize a public asset, in my opinion, transparency should be the order of the day".

Mr. Nixon goes on: "My review has left me with but one conclusion. To leave in place an inadequate contract, arrived at with such a flawed process and under the shadow of possible political manipulation, is unacceptable".

Could it be any clearer? In view of such comments, to compensate people or companies who tried to take advantage of these irregularities would be unacceptable. What about all the wonderful promises of transparency in the Liberal Party's red bible?

That is why we insist that there be a public and independent inquiry, so that the government can get to the bottom of those sad events.

Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf): Mr. Speaker, as you can well imagine, I too am going to speak on Bill C-22, because apparently, our colleagues across the floor have not yet understood how essential and urgent it is to have a royal commission of inquiry to get right to the bottom of this matter.

• (1210)

I am going to go over the arguments presented to help them in their reflexion. We have to know first if the plan to privatize terminals 1 and 2 at Pearson airport in Toronto was in the best public interest. If not, who benefited from this project?

I remind you, because this was repeated time and again, that at the end of the request for proposals process which was rather brief, only two bidders had made a proposal for a 57 year lease—yes, Mr. Speaker, you heard it right, 57 years—to administer the two terminals.

In fact, we had a proposal from Paxport and another one from Claridge. Then, on December 7, 1992—and I am quoting the Nixon report here—"Paxport Inc. was announced as the best overall acceptable proposal". Very interesting: between two bidders, they chose the best. Well, yes and no.

No, because on February 1, 1993, Paxport and the other company, Claridge, joined forces to form a joint venture partnership called T1 T2 Ltd.; T1 was probably for terminal 1 and T2 for terminal 2. These two distinct bidders whose proposals had certainly been prepared separately decided to join forces when one of them was awarded the contract. I am sure it was pure coincidence.

However, on October 7, 1993, the then Prime Minister gave explicit instructions that this transaction, that is the signature of the agreement with the new company, be concluded the same day, even though the current Prime Minister, who was then the Leader of the Opposition, had indicated clearly during the election campaign that if ever an agreement was signed, he would cancel it.

We can ask ourselves this question: Why would a Prime Minister get up one morning and decide that on this marvellous day, she was going to act stupid? No, a Prime Minister does not get up one morning with such a thing in mind. I am convinced she believed she was doing something intelligent. Well, according to the Nixon report, that intelligent thing was, and I quote: "—the concluding of this transaction at Prime Ministerial direction in the midst of an election campaign where this issue was controversial, in my view flies in the face of normal and honourable democratic practice. It is a well known and carefully observed tradition that when governments dissolve Parliament they must accept a restricted power of decision during the election period. Certainly—and I am still quoting the Nixon report—the closing of a transaction of significant financial importance, sealing for 57 years the privatization of a major public asset should not have been entered into during an election campaign". And Mr. Nixon concludes:

It is my opinion that the process to privatize and redevelop terminals 1 and 2 at Pearson fell far short of maximizing the public interest.

My question thus brings out a first conclusion: it is not likely in the best interest of the population that one morning the Prime Minister decided to have that agreement signed. In whose interest then? Or for what reason? And why?

• (1215)

I would like to be naive, but as you can see I have a hard time believing, and an even harder time stating, that this decision was made only for altruistic purposes on the part of the parties involved.

Therefore, I am quite happy that the Prime Minister of this 35th legislature decided to terminate that agreement through Bill C-22. However, a second question comes to mind. That bill gives the minister the authority to pay compensations, which are for all intents and purposes quite discretionary, to those involved who might have sustained losses. I repeat: Is that in the