

National Air Policy

[*Translation*]

—in both official languages, and perhaps particularly members from New Brunswick who speak from time to time in this House. But—

[*English*]

If I might reply directly to the question put by the hon. member, we are interested in providing the citizens of northern Ontario with a much wider mix of air services that will be available to them together with strong regional air carriers and strong local air carriers that will serve not only the large centres of northern Ontario, but also the smaller centres of northern Ontario. And that is clearly possible if, but only if, there is a change in the approach by government to the climate in which regional and third level carriers have to operate in this country. That is the change this party believes is essential now and to which we will give high priority when we are elected as the government.

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport and Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, I am indebted to the hon. member for Fort William (Mr. McRae) for asking that question of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark). It is noted all around that the Leader of the Opposition did not answer the question. He did say during his remarks that he was in favour of Air Canada getting out of certain routes in northern Ontario and southwestern Ontario. It is now apparent from his refusal to answer the specific question that he is in favour of their getting out in general, but he will not be in favour of their getting out in any specific case. Community interest in maintaining service by Air Canada has very often restrained Air Canada from moving in the direction of giving over those services to the regionals, and many of these communities feel very strongly about retaining that particular link and service.

I noted that the Leader of the Opposition began in a manner that is fairly characteristic of him—and I would have to call it a small-minded way—by discussing first of all the timing of our announcement. I would think cabinet procedures are well known to him. He might have calculated that the decision which was announced yesterday was indeed taken on Thursday in cabinet and that the announcement was made before I had any knowledge that this subject was chosen by him and his party for debate at this time.

The Leader of the Opposition will go on making points like that. Quite often he manages to persuade at least the press, and perhaps thereby some of the public, that certain things may be true when they have no basis in fact at all. I noticed the CBC decided yesterday to pick up that in some fashion our policy was really a complete steal from the policy of the Leader of the Opposition. I find it passing strange that he can both adopt that position on the one hand and criticize our policy vehemently on the other. He goes both ways. He tried the same thing by making reference today to the Kingston meeting he had with certain premiers and likened the events to a first ministers' conference.

In fact many of the substantial matters which in specific terms were contained in our proposals at the first ministers'

conference referred back to proposals we had made in 1969, 1970 and 1971. The specific proposals on individual powers which might be transferred to the provinces were indeed new, and I think less than half of those had any relationship to things which the Leader of the Opposition has said. But the important thing, and the fundamental difference between the policy this government will continue to fight for and put in place and that of the Leader of the Opposition, is that the Leader of the Opposition believes in giving away important powers to the provinces which would prevent the federal government from operating in a Canadian economic context at all.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lang: In that he joins the premier of Alberta who believes that the Canadian government need not have the major economic and important power to assure freedom of trade and freedom of movement of people, and indeed even principles of equalization of opportunity which are so closely tied to financial equalization in this country.

An hon. Member: That is not correct.

Mr. Lang: The premier of Alberta has taken that position. He is an outstanding separatist in taking that position and I am delighted to see that in recent days the papers in Calgary and Edmonton have taken him on specifically on that issue. I would hope now the Leader of the Opposition would see the sense of avoiding that particular policy and form of action.

The Leader of the Opposition also made some serious critical comments about the existence, still in Canadian ownership, of Canadair and de Havilland. Then he had the strange ability, later on in his remarks, to argue that we should have far more manufacturing ability in the air industry in this country than we do have. In fact, the stories of Canadair and de Havilland are the beginnings of great success stories. The Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Horner) featured that in answers today as the Challenger begins to go into its tests.

Hon. members opposite amaze me with their lack of understanding of the development of an aircraft. They were so critical and amazed that the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce found it important that on its first test everything had gone well. The aircraft had gone through an hour of tests and the opposition found that amusing. If they knew anything about the interesting challenges facing new aircraft and the importance of what this aircraft is starting to prove to the people who envisioned it and said could happen, they would not laugh in that way.

In fact, Canadair and de Havilland were a rather special case in that federal involvement in financing was essential even to maintain them before they were taken over and retired by the government. The question facing the government at that time was how much further we would go to help without taking on the equity ownership and control so that the eventual benefits which we thought would come could also be proved to the people of Canada. It is still our intention to do this when