

Government Orders

I will venture two answers. First, you do not bite the hand that feeds you, when that hand is called Charles Bronfman, Léo Kolber, Herb Metcalfe, Ramsay Withers—I have five fingers. Second, you do not bite the hand that feeds others. What others? Let me give you the list, Mr. Speaker.

Don Matthews, who presided over Brian Mulroney's nomination campaign in 1983 and former president of the Conservative Party; Bill Neville, Conservative lobbyist, former chief of staff of Joe Clark and leader of Prime Minister Kim Campbell transition team; Hugh Riopelle, another lobbyist with easy access to Don Mazankowsky's Cabinet, strong-man of the Mulroney Cabinet; Fred Doucet, yet another Conservative lobbyist and former chief of staff of Brian Mulroney.

We have come full circle. The Pearson Airport affair is a dubious affair. Through its leader, the Official Opposition indicated it refused to proceed with the second reading of Bill C-22, the very principle of which is flawed because the bill contains no provision to ensure the transparency of the lobbyists' work. This government has been harping about transparency for too long. We urge it to finally take actions that are in line with its commitments. The Leader of the Official Opposition said: "The Bloc will oppose Bill C-22 first and foremost because a royal commission of inquiry must be appointed to clarify this dark episode in which the ethical behaviour of the government and some related players was not up to par".

Since October 25, this government has made a number of decisions in keeping with its election promises. In Quebec, the helicopter contract was cancelled. But what compensation was provided for the jobs lost, all those high-tech jobs so essential to Quebec? Are there prospects of industrial reconversion? No sign of a program so far. It is true that Quebec workers are not the biggest contributors to the Liberal Party of Canada fund.

In Toronto, the airport contract is cancelled. In that case, we know who will be compensated. The people of Canada know, and so do the people of Quebec. There will be no jobs lost and the friends of the Pearson Development Corporation will be recompensed, I mean compensated!

On the one hand, signed contracts are being cancelled, while on the other hand, incredibly enough, verbal ones are being kept. I am referring, of course, to the Ginn Publishing affair. We demand that the government be consistent with itself. If it is seeking transparency, then it must put before this House a bill on the democratic financing of political parties. Quebec is a North American leader in that regard. I would therefore urge the government to follow Quebec's lead. There is no shame in trailing behind Quebec in that area, for this is one of many areas where Quebec, perhaps owing to its inherent difference, sees and does things differently.

• (1115)

I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that whenever Quebec will decide to stop towing the Canadian trailer, my country will gladly continue to co-operate with its neighbour for the sake of contributing to build a fairer and more equitable world.

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, virtually everyone applauded the government when it cancelled the Pearson deal last December. With Bill C-22, the Liberals have watered down their position, so to speak. They would like to hand the minister a blank cheque with which to compensate the contracting parties, mainly, one would assume, their Liberal friends.

[English]

The Minister of Transport has said that the government will try to be reasonable and equitable with the would-be developers while negotiating their out of pocket expenses. I submit that in the interests of being reasonable and equitable with the taxpayers of Canada, not one red cent should be paid out. A group of businessmen, all of legal age and presumably of sound mind, played a risky game of political chicken and they lost. That should be the end of the matter.

Let us not forget that prior to the execution of the agreement with the T1 T2 Limited Partnership on October 7, 1993 the then Leader of the Opposition who is now the Prime Minister clearly warned the parties proceeding to conclude the privatization transaction they would do so at their own risk and that a new government would not hesitate to pass legislation to block the deal.

Going ahead under those circumstances was a dumb business decision. We should have no sympathy and the minister should keep a firm grip on our pocketbook.

I find it fascinating that while the government stands ready to pay who knows how many millions of dollars to pacify its friends, the Ministry of Transport is declining to honour commitments made by the previous government to upgrade small airports.

Last year the Hon. John Corbeil approved an expenditure of \$230,000 to resurface a runway and improve lighting at the Assiniboia, Saskatchewan airport under the local commercial airport's financial assistance program.

The final agreement had not been executed when the government was defeated. On November 17, 1993 officials of Transport Canada attended a meeting in Assiniboia and presented the town council with an agreement for signature. The agreement was signed and returned to Ottawa for execution and there the matter rests. In February a functionary in the minister's office informed the mayor by telephone that the agreement was on hold and the minister's office is not returning calls on this matter.