

Oral Questions

Mr. Murphy: That's all right, you lied to pensioners too, all of you. All of you lied to pensioners right across the country.

Mr. Shields: Union tactics, that's what it is. We know all about that.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask Hon. Members, in putting questions, to lay the facts upon which a question is to be asked, to use the preamble for the appropriate purpose. I would ask Hon. Ministers, when replying, not to stray unduly into argument. The Hon. Member.

DECISION-MAKING POWERS

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is also for the Right Hon. Prime Minister. The Prime Minister just indicated, in extensive quotes, what he said at one time or another. He indicated that he would ensure that the Government of Canada would maintain majority control of Air Canada. That is what he just said in the House of Commons.

What kind of a business transaction would give complete decision-making powers to a group of minority shareholders? Why did the Government not at least have the consideration to do what the British did? They maintained a golden share so that the British Government would always have, in the final analysis on critical matters, complete decision-making. Why is the Prime Minister prepared to give over the decision-making rights for Air Canada to a minority set of shareholders?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I think my hon. friend asks an entirely appropriate philosophical question. There can be an important philosophical disagreement as to the manner in which this ought to be handled. It is no secret that this Chamber represents different political ideologies and they will find an expression, no doubt, in the fundamental debate and the approach to this matter. I will be happy to engage my friend in debate on this at any time.

Last night, for example, on the CBC Allan Gow, the labour reporter, said:

Most of the workers here think that privatization is a great idea. The union leadership, though, has quite a different view.

He then quoted Bob White who said:

I think it won't stand the test of time.

Here is where the ideology enters into it and where the differences appear. Bob White is a Vice-President of the NDP and I understand his point of view. However, Mr. Gow concludes:

Union leaders will have a hard time convincing anyone that privatization of Air Canada is anything but good. Their members are already anxious to get a piece of the action and the general public will continue to hear from the Government that privatization will mean a more efficient airline.

There is a fundamental point of view. The NDP disagrees with it. We will debate it in the House of Commons and allow the people to decide whether this is the proper way to go.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PRESERVATION OF JOBS—REQUEST FOR LEGISLATIVE GUARANTEE

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister indicates what this particular initiative will do to the men and women working for Air Canada, he ought to be reminded of the experience in Britain with the privatization of British Airways. Twenty-three thousand men and women lost their jobs as a result of the privatization process.

The Prime Minister knows that the previous comments by the Deputy Prime Minister about the situation of Air Canada today do not hold for the future because the decision-making will be done by a minority group. If the Prime Minister is committed to preserving those jobs for the men and women who presently work for Air Canada, will he indicate that he believes what he says and, as a result, when the legislation is brought forward, if it is in fact ever brought forward, it will include provisions to guarantee the jobs for the men and women who presently work for Air Canada?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I did not say what the workers said; they said it themselves. The CBC quoted the workers directly saying that they thought that privatization is a great idea.

We listened to my hon. friend and the NDP when the privatization of de Havilland was debated. We heard the predictions of doom and gloom and they are on the record of the House. When Fisheries Products International was debated, it too was supposed to go down the chute. It is bringing prosperity to the fishermen of Newfoundland.

De Havilland has been a success story and Fisheries Products has been a success story. Every company that we have privatized has been a success, as Air Canada will be, because this initiative meets with the general desire of the workers and will strengthen both Canada and Air Canada as a corporation.

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● (1440)

[Translation]

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

REQUEST THAT MINISTER ANNOUNCE PROGRAM FOR QUEBEC

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion. Today we read that the provincial Minister responsible for research and development accused the federal Government of being \$1.3 billion behind in real spending and that Quebec was suffering the consequences.