

Government Orders

There would have been no question of an agenda or of a timetable. We would have devoted all of our energies and efforts to studying this legislation as quickly as possible.

It so happens that, like the Conservatives, the Liberals have their political friends. Therefore, they are duty bound to support them. When you have a national party like the Liberal Party and you are looking for financial backup like they do, it is understandable that you be bound by the election fund that allows you to be in politics.

Of course, we, in Quebec, have freed ourselves from such a thing. This is part of René Levesque's legacy, this great political figure Félix Leclerc said was part of a much too short list of liberators of the people. The main thing we have inherited from the Levesque era was this piece of legislation he gave the National Assembly, one of the very first ones introduced in the Parti Québécois government's mandate. Those were the days, the early days of the Parti Québécois government, days that will come back though!

• (1030)

You are aware of the political situation. I will not elaborate on the subject, but some optimism is permitted on this side of the House. The reason we are in this predicament is because we do not have legislation "that has teeth" respecting lobbyists.

So, in March 1992, the government called for tenders—also known as bids in government language—for the privatization of Terminals 1 and 2 at Pearson Airport.

If you were the least bit concerned by the issue, you were already wondering: Why privatize Pearson Airport? In terms of public facilities, can you think of something more common, more public than an airport? Why privatize Pearson Airport then, if for one thing, it was the main airport in Canada and, for another, it was profitable? This was an airport that actually showed profits on its books, an airport that did not carry losses. Already, people were wondering: why privatize a piece of our national heritage which is crucial to the Ontario economy, as we know, when it showed profits?

You will tell me this is typical of the silly way of thinking of a Conservative government in bed with—and almost incestuously so—the private sector. That is what the ideological motivation was.

In the end, in June 1992, two bids were received. Strangely enough, the public tendering process on such a major public stake had produced only two bids, both bidders already having ties with the airport administration. And, let us not forget the time limit potential suppliers were given to submit tenders; the entire process lasted but 90 days. That was the first technical irregularity. Every member who knows anything about administrative law knows, for instance, that the labour standards com-

mittee gives 90 days to initiate whatever collective agreement grievance, even for matters much less binding. That is the minimum time allotted in the notice of dispute.

Yet, it was decided to apply this minimum time limit to something as major as a multimillion privatization process. So, that was the first irregularity, and observers did not fail to point it out. That is the crux of the controversy and this is where we really get the feeling of doing our job as the opposition, by raising these facts.

Who were these bidders? Who are they? Paxport is a consortium controlled by Don Matthews group. Don Matthews was president of Brian Mulroney's leadership campaign in 1983. My apologies to Joe Clark for saying this, but Don Matthews was president of Brian Mulroney's leadership campaign. This man is part of the Conservative Party machinery. He is so much a part of it that he was the mastermind behind four or five national fund-raising campaigns. And you know that Tory national fund-raising campaigns generally involve several zeros and that most of the money comes from private enterprise.

So the first bidder is directly linked to this great Tory family, now a kind of nuclear family, we agree, but once a little more extended than it is now.

An hon. member: Almost a single-parent family.

Mr. Ménard: Almost a single-parent family, I am told, Mr. Speaker.

The second bidder, Claridge Properties Inc., is a company owned by Charles Bronfman, who is not exactly the most destitute of Canadians or the closest to the Optimist Club or the Salvation Army. He is, however, quite close to the Liberal Prime Minister. And we saw during the campaign the tenuous cocktail-circuit links connecting Charles Bronfman to this Liberal family he is still a part of.

• (1035)

The two bidders are going to merge and, whether Tory or Liberal, it all amounts to the same thing. Our two bidders are going to merge into T1 T2 Limited Partnership, which will be the new company responsible for privatizing Terminals 1 and 2. It reeks of scandal, patronage, nepotism. That is why the Official Opposition thinks we must shed light on this issue. And to do it as expeditiously as the government wants—a government that has still not made public the legal text of this privatization deal—we say a commission of enquiry is needed to deal with this blot on, this breach of democracy.

This case reminds us that the federal administration will be faced with this kind of situation until we have, as demanded by the Official Opposition and the Reform Party, a lobbyists law with teeth. The government must resolve the issue.