

It must be as obvious to the Minister of Transport as it is to the country, and in particular the knowledgeable people in the air line industry, that by practically every standard or test by which an executive is measured, the chairman and chief executive officer of Air Canada has struck out, and if the chairman remains it will be even more obvious than it is now that he is remaining only because of his relationship as a sycophant of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau); he is willing to be exactly that in return for whatever personal prestige he imagines there may be in his present position as head of Air Canada while it heads for a second deficit.

The government's attitude through failing to comply with information requests underscores the fact that this air line has become a convenient refuge for would-be entrepreneurs who can attempt to wheel and deal in wine, or sugar, or what have you, while still having the security of our national air line to fall back on for their pay cheques.

Let us consider Air Canada's experience with Mr. Alfredo Laforet of Sunset Crest Villa in Barbados, which is right on target, you will no doubt be glad to hear, Mr. Speaker, with the topic with which the motion of the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) deals. Mr. Laforet is a man about whom a good book could be written. He really took Yves Menard and Air Canada to the cleaners in a most direct and casual manner, leaving the Barbados shipping and trading company with a large debt, doing the same with Air Canada and its subsidiary, but doing very well for himself. The details will be most interesting to the people of the country if Air Canada is honest enough to bring them forward for analysis.

Let us consider the firm of Caribbean Sales and Leasing Incorporated which, by the way, has the same postal address as the solicitor for Sunset Crest Limited but has no permanent staff or offices.—Rather strange! This company, which attempted to engineer a \$100 million sugar deal at a time when our country was experiencing real shortages of this vital commodity, has as its principals several Air Canada executives, including Mr. Ray Lindsay.

The traces of Air Canada's ineptitude in extracurricular activities manifest themselves in particular ways. For example, they linger on. If one were to call Air Canada asking to be booked into Southern Palms Hotel outside Bridgetown, their computer will indicate that this is a substandard hotel, which is very ironic since Air Canada once tried to buy it. The owner, you see, is the recipient of this type of classification for this hotel because of a grudge carried over from dealing with Air Canada and Yves Menard. The computer had been adjusted accordingly.

● (1820)

I hoped that the Minister of Transport when he assumed the portfolio would be a reformer, a man who would have the courage to clean house and make decisions. If he does this then I can certainly pledge my support in this House and in committee for his efforts to rationalize our transportation policies and, in the case of Air Canada, clean out the Augean stables which exist in its structure. As a beginning, Mr. Speaker, let us have the documents requested by the hon. member for Vegreville. Let us have some action to improve Air Canada immediately before it suffers

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irreparable harm under present policies and under the present management.

Mr. W. Kenneth Robinson (Toronto-Lakeshore): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak at this time, first to reply to the motion requesting copies of correspondence and agreements between Sunset Crest Ltd., now a subsidiary of Barbados Shipping and Trading Company, and any employee of Air Canada or its subsidiaries; and secondly, to reply to some of the criticism that has been directed to Air Canada.

On April 7, 1975, the minister replied to the following questions:

1. What are the details of the various contracts entered into by Air Canada with Sunset Crest Ltd. of Barbados?
2. Who approved the contracts and what is the length of each?

The minister said that the management of Air Canada had advised him as follows:

The information requested is of a proprietary nature and Air Canada believes it should not be made public for competitive reasons.

The advice of Air Canada's management in respect of the notice of motion for the production of papers requiring copies of correspondence and agreements between Sunset Crest Ltd. and any employee of Air Canada or its subsidiaries is that in the interest of staff relations and for competitive reasons such information should not be made public.

I believe there is an inherent danger every time a government exempts certain papers or documents from production. The danger is that there will be an increase in public skepticism of government, a skepticism which has been growing in the past few years in most western democracies. When a document is exempt from production, regardless of the validity of reasons given for its exemption, the government leaves itself open to charges that it is trying to hide something which may be politically embarrassing or damaging.

In most cases the only defence against these kinds of charges is the production of the papers and, conversely, the only means to substantiate the charges is the actual publication of the documents in question. As a result, without being able to see the information which has been requested, we are left in a sort of daisy-plucking situation in regard to the government's motives; are they based on the expected criteria for the exemption of the production of papers or documents required for the effective functioning of government, or are they using the criteria merely to avoid political embarrassment?

I believe this kind of situation in the long run undermines the trust on which our democratic and parliamentary system is based. There are many arguments for greater accessibility to information, not the least being simply that both members of parliament and the public require as much information as possible if they are to make a meaningful contribution to the decision-making process.

Still, I feel the most complete argument is that publication of the papers requested eliminates that situation which I have described, where the motives of the government are questioned, and the harmful consequences that brings with it.