

Eldorado Nuclear Limited

We have concluded that we are getting a bad deal on Eldorado. One of the reasons for that is that we have learned, with regard to the costs and benefits to the public of Canada, that the public is giving a blank cheque in terms of the prospective costs of cleaning up the Eldorado refinery site in Port Hope. We are selling off hundreds of millions of dollars of debt at 30 cents or 40 cents on the dollar to the newly merged corporation. That does not sound like a particularly good deal to me. It suggests to me that the Government has slashed the price of Eldorado at a time when the market is weak in order to get it out of the Government's portfolio.

We do not know what the case is with Air Canada, but it seems to me that if it is not less effective there must have been other ways of handling it. I think Canadians will conclude that today's announcement by the Deputy Prime Minister is a bad deal for Canadians. It is a bad deal to have a privatization policy which that particular deal violates, according to the criteria set out by the Minister responsible for privatization. It violates it in almost every respect, and yet the Government is still apparently planning to go ahead with it.

● (1610)

Then there is the question of accountability. We have raised questions about Eldorado, but we have not had them adequately answered. How will the uranium mining industry as represented by Eldorado, a major player, be accountable to the public on such issues as safety from nuclear radiation and the safety and health of the workers involved?

As an Ontario politician, I was involved when we in Ontario were attempting to get a handle on the dangers to health and safety to the miners of Denison Mines in Elliot Lake. Believe me, it was an impossible situation, exacerbated by the intervention at that time of the Government of Canada which sought to impose weak health and safety rules on the workers. In fact, it seems to me that the matter was extremely badly handled at that time.

Eldorado is about to be privatized. We want this to be delayed. We do not think it should occur because we think it is a bad deal. At the very least, we should have some understanding of how accountability for the workers and for the Canadians who may be affected by radiation will occur. We do not have that information.

If I can extend the parallel, we do not know how accountability will take place with respect to Air Canada either. In uranium mining, as in air transportation and rail transportation, we have developed a unique structure which has served Canada well. That structure has been provided by initiatives taken by the public sector. Eldorado is one example of this and Canadian National and Air Canada are other examples. There has been the continuation of private sector companies as well.

There has been healthy competition between the public and the private sector, and this has served Canada well. This has been a difficult country to develop, and one of the reasons we

have succeeded in making this country work has been the initiatives of these public as well as private sector enterprises.

We are about to abandon that approach. The Government says that it is abandoning the whole idea of a public enterprise culture which is what has helped to make this country great. Many parts of Canada will continue to depend on that intervention by Government. "Intervention" is not a dirty word to me, particularly in those cases when it is absolutely essential that there be public involvement so that Canadians can have adequate standards of living, reasonable opportunities and reasonable equality. This is only ensured through acting together.

In a family, there is nothing wrong with acting together to make sure that the kids get educated and that the old people are looked after. Canada is a big family as well. We use different means in order to ensure the same kinds of things if we are a caring, a sharing and a compassionate society. However, we are pulling away from that kind of society and are letting the law of the market rule in more and more sectors.

Yesterday there were reports in Montreal newspapers about the rather extraordinary speech made by Robert Campeau, a man who has now become an American industrialist, to the Canadian Club in Montreal. I regret that he had almost nothing to say in French, his native tongue, to the Chamber of Commerce of Montreal, but he was blaming and damning the Government for being too soft. He was suggesting that we should get out of medicare and that we are spending too much on social welfare and the like. He somehow conveniently forgot that the Campeau Corporation, now the proprietor of some \$12-worth of retailing assets in the United States, in fact benefited at its initial stages from the intervention and participation of the Government of Canada, the City of Ottawa and the public sector. This gave Mr. Robert Campeau, his colleagues and his associates a springboard from which they were able to build the multibillion dollar corporate empire which Mr. Campeau now controls.

I asked myself what the devil is going on. I ask why these things are happening. What is the Government hearing? What is really involved?

If there had been opinion polling about the privatization of Eldorado, I suspect that it would have duplicated the results of recent opinion polls which have suggested that even a majority of Progressive Conservative supporters, and that is rock bottom because they are down so far in the polls, think that Air Canada should have stayed in public hands. I bet that they would say the same thing about Eldorado as well.

I do not know what the political strategy of the Government is. If it tries to pull in New Democratic votes or Liberal votes on issues like privatization, it will find itself running into a brick wall of resistance.

Why do Canadians resist this ideological drive to privatization? What is the reason for this? I would say it is quite simply