

*Air Canada*

have been no verbal problems at all, as far as I am able to determine. Had there been any verbal problems in this regard, I would have come forward and helped had I been in the area. I know there are others in the area who would do the same.

I question the need for this competency at the Victoria airport. There are other international airports in Canada where such competency is required. I do not question that fact at all. I also question why Air Canada should be the agent for circulating this instruction. The area to which I refer is located in a Department of Transport building. Air Canada is not the only air service which uses the building. Why was it the president of Air Canada who issued the instruction? If the instruction had to be issued at all, it should have been issued by the Minister of Transport. Therefore, I feel there should be, in this reorganization bill about which we are now speaking, a clear understanding of the scope of the requirement of Air Canada. Air Canada is operating its aircraft on the ground and in the air, and in that capacity it has a responsibility in respect of bilingualism, which it is exercising. But surely it does not have the same responsibility with respect to federal properties such as airport buildings.

Let me end on a happy note, Mr. Speaker. I make it clear that, due to the very good sense of representatives of Air Canada in Victoria, supported by the president of Air Canada, it was agreed there would be no implementation of this requirement until vacancies occurred through attrition. There has been no change. Let me suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that the form of aggravation which occurred in that area would be as great in Schefferville, for example, if Air Canada insisted upon English language competency in that area. I am just not sure about baggage handlers; probably they do not talk to the passengers, either. It may very well be that such a requirement would be circulated in that area, as well, by Air Canada.

As I have said, I have raised this matter with the president of Air Canada and I am awaiting a reply to my letter. I raise this question today because of the absurdity of the requirement and because of my puzzlement as to why the president of Air Canada would be the person to suggest such a requirement.

[*Translation*]

There can be no objection to our Crown corporations' commitment to offer our citizens the required services in the official language of their choice, and take the necessary measures wherever there is sufficient demand. But requiring the second language in areas where demand is almost non-existent can only worsen the language situation that is intricate enough already. I hope that Air Canada officers have learned their lesson and will apply bilingualism in places where there is sufficient demand for the second official language, whether it be English or French.

[*English*]

**Mr. Cyril Symes (Sault Ste. Marie):** Mr. Speaker, I shall be brief at this stage of the debate. However, I wish to reiterate the concern of the NDP regarding the bill before us, which is to reorganize Air Canada. We know that certain clauses of the bill indicate the government wishes Air Canada to operate

[Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich).]

primarily at a profit, even if that means—as we all know it will—reduction of service in certain areas. Because of the stated opinion of the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) here and elsewhere, we are concerned about the selling off of profitable parts of public enterprises to private enterprise. He voiced that opinion regarding Canadian National Railways and parts of Air Canada.

● (1552)

As I have said before in this debate, and as has been stated by my colleagues, our transportation system is vital to the unity and the economic strength of this country. Because we are a large geographic area with sparse population, it means that we cannot operate a transportation system solely on the concept of making a profit, whether it be rail or air service. If we want to bind the country together and service people in regions of low population, in order for them to have access to good transportation services like people in large urban centres we must realize that Air Canada and other modes of transportation will operate at a deficit at times in order to serve the public good.

We in the New Democratic Party are not saying we should abandon all fiscal responsibility and not worry about the kind of deficit that is mounting. Obviously, we are concerned about efficient operation. What worries us is that this bill and this Liberal government, supported by the Conservatives, seems to indicate that the concept of service will be secondary to the concept of making a profit. That principle is totally unacceptable. Air Canada and the CNR were formed in response to the public need for adequate service and transportation which the private industry was not willing or able to fulfil because such service could not be operated at a profit. Therefore, the government had to step in to provide a service. In any civilized society, surely that is the rational and correct thing to do.

Under the direction of the Minister of Transport, we see an attempt by this government to dismantle the great public enterprises which have been formulated in the past in order to service the public good. We in this party cannot accept that kind of philosophy. We see moves afoot to reduce Air Canada's service to the smaller centres and hear the argument of some transport advisory committees that Air Canada should drop the small-centres routes, such as the routes to many places in northern Ontario and Atlantic Canada, and turn those over to the smaller regional carriers.

We know from experience that the smaller regional carriers do not provide the same high level of service as Air Canada. In all likelihood, the smaller carrier will face a deficit, just as Air Canada does, in terms of servicing the smaller population centres. Whether it is the private carrier that is subsidized, or Air Canada, the taxpayers will foot the bill.

In the concept of public enterprise, we as members of parliament have some say in how that public enterprise operates, which we do not have in respect of private enterprise. Public enterprise should be the norm in our transportation system, not the private carriers. The reason Air Canada and the entire airline business is facing deficits in this country is