

Oral Questions

authorized in excess of another 100 person-years. A series of nine steps have been taken, including doubling the number of RCMP officers who are now located at our various airports. At the 10 major international airports, including Vancouver and Gander, Toronto, of course, Ottawa, Mirabel, Halifax, Winnipeg and Calgary, we have spent \$24 million on enhancing security.

I will tell you this, Mr. Speaker, our system will stand up to that of any other country in the world. I quote the President of ICAO for confirmation.

CBC REPORT ON BAGGAGE HANDLING

Mr. Fernand Robichaud (Westmorland—Kent): Mr. Speaker, we are not disputing the fact that certain measures have been taken. We are only saying that there are major flaws in those measures.

Some reports claim that the new computerized baggage-matching system used for domestic and international flights is ineffective against terrorist bomb attacks. The CBC reported this morning that over 50,000 pieces of luggage per day are placed on board domestic and international flights with no security whatsoever. In this case, what is the Minister doing to correct this major flaw and to reassure the travelling public?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, what I intend to do in this case is to correct CBC Radio, that is what needs the correction.

In October, 1986, Canada instituted a complete baggage match system for all international flights from Canada to the rest of the world. This was a requirement that ICAO said should start by December 19, 1987. As the Hon. Member can see, we are a year and several months ahead of ICAO's schedule. As a matter of fact, western European countries have called upon ICAO to give them some more breathing time and to delay this request until April of 1989. However, we have now had it in effect for a year and several months.

In addition, the situation with domestic flights is that, once baggage is checked into the system, the passenger cannot get access to it. If there is a risk situation or threats phoned in, special measures need to be taken and then the passenger match system or an x-ray system goes into effect. However, in the ordinary course of events, that is the security procedure taken on domestic flights. We are working on a baggage match system for domestic flights but we are not able to start that until we get computer systems that can handle it because of the chaos that would otherwise be caused.

[*Translation*]

SYSTEM'S TWO WEAKNESSES—INQUIRY AS TO WHAT MEASURES GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO TAKE

Mr. Fernand Robichaud (Westmorland—Kent): Mr. Speaker, the security problem is not the CBC but the airport baggage screening system. In fact, the computerized baggage matching system can be circumvented in two ways: first, a passenger who becomes ill at the last minute fails to board and

does not withdraw his baggage; second, a passenger on stand-by may be turned down at the last minute while his baggage goes off with the plane just the same.

What kind of measures does the Minister intend to take to correct these two flaws in the system?

[*English*]

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, there are no weaknesses in the system. The baggage match system is in full effect on international flights.

There are two situations in which exceptions are made.

Mr. Benjamin: Bull Durum.

Mr. Crosbie: It may be Bull Durum or it may be anything the hon. gentleman wants to make it. He should know better than to sit there fuming away about Bull Durum.

On international flights, two exceptions are permitted. If someone is taken ill at the last moment, the baggage may remain on the aircraft. Sorry, that is for a trans-border flight. If the person is an employee of an air carrier and does not get on the flight because it is full and the employee has a bag on it, that is permitted, as it is if a passenger has been denied boarding because of stand-by status. These are the only exceptions for international flights that are allowed when the baggage match system is in effect.

X-RAYING OF BAGGAGE

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister and is on the same subject. Canadian air passengers assume that they are being protected by the Government of Canada. The facts seem to suggest otherwise.

I would like to ask the Minister whether all baggage, both national and international, is x-rayed before it is boarded onto aircraft, and if not, why is it not?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, that is just the point. The Government has chosen to follow the recommendations of the International Civil Aviation Organization. Rather than having a system of x-ray examination of baggage, we have chosen the baggage match system as being the best system. Therefore, on international flights there is no longer an x-ray of baggage. If there were to be a special risk situation, that would be different, but in the ordinary course of events there is a baggage match. The baggage is matched up with the passengers.

By the way, that is why the union official quoted by the CBC story is so eager to speak. He represents the persons who are employed to do the x-raying. There are fewer of them now doing the x-raying because of the baggage match system. They naturally prefer the x-ray system to the baggage match system, but we are going by what security experts and the International Civil Aviation Organization advises to do.