

*Aeronautics Act*

respective ridings and constituents . . . But the Official Opposition will show magnanimity; it will not abuse the time of the House, because we recognize that this is a technical bill, not a political one; we will not play politics with this bill, preferring to help the government provide Canada with a modern and effective legislation in the area of aeronautics.

● (1620)

[English]

**Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the eagerness of the Minister to have the Bill dealt with in the House as quickly as possible in order that it can be referred to committee. It has been a long time in the making. I have listened to discussions in Transport Committee meetings with seven different Ministers of Transport during the last 17 years and on every occasion the matter of rewriting the Aeronautics Act arose.

I suppose the delay has been due to the new developments in technology and the increased variety of aircraft. Those factors have meant, and will continue to mean in the future, that the regulations have to be updated continually.

The Bill allows the Ministry to administer the regulations. However, most of the areas which affect the industry or civil aviation are not contained in the Bill but exist only in the regulations over which the Minister has complete control.

The Bill itself is not very technical. It merely establishes the machinery and the bureaucracy for the regulatory powers. I submit that much analysis of the regulations will be required before the effect of the legislation can be measured. In that light, I hope the Minister will make the commitment that the committee, in dealing with the second reading of the Bill, will have access to the regulations, if they have been printed, which will be brought in under this legislation. The committee should go over every regulation which is proposed under this legislation and, as well, should hear witnesses from the various groups which are directly or closely involved in civil aviation.

I appreciate that there has been a great deal of consultation with concerned groups, including the Canadian Owners and Pilots Association, the Canadian Air Line Pilots Association, air traffic controllers, the Saskatchewan Flying Farmers Association, and others. However, being consulted with respect to the Bill is different from being consulted on the actual detailed regulations. Some of that consultation may have already taken place. But in any case I would ask the Minister if the regulations have been printed and if they will be referred to the committee in conjunction with this Bill. In addition, will the committee be allowed to hear witnesses with respect to the regulations? I find very little in the Bill with which the organizations or other interested groups would take serious issue or to which they would take exception. I suspect that if there are serious exceptions they will arise from the regulations.

Canada has more pilots and planes per capita than any other country in the world. The fact that this Act has not had a good going-over since the 1920s should suggest that a sufficient amount of time must be allocated in committee to

ensure that proper consultation is held with the public regarding the regulations. The Bill gives the Minister complete control over the regulations and operations, as well as over security and the imposition of charges for the use of air services. Again, I hope the Minister will depart from the practices which were too often carried out by previous Ministers who arbitrarily made decisions with little or no consultations, including consultations with the standing committee. I am confident that the Minister, with his long-standing membership on the committee and his hard work and experience, will want to hold those consultations.

The legislation not only gives the Minister complete control over the regulations and operations, it also gives him the power to appoint members to a board of inquiry in order to investigate an incident or accident involving an aircraft which affects safety. I hope the Minister will call upon all the various agencies and organizations and ask them to provide a list of names of people who have expertise from which he can choose. I realize the Minister will want to choose a few people himself, but that is a way of consulting which would provide a broad cross-section of people who have knowledge and expertise regarding air safety and the investigation of incidents and accidents.

I agree that the Ministry of Transport should not investigate accidents which pertain to the regulations that the Department will enforce. I agree that those kinds of investigations should be carried out outside the Ministry. However, I thought that the CTC would have been strengthened and its independence increased. I feel that the Air Transport Committee of the CTC should have been strengthened and that its investigatory powers should have been enlarged. If that had been done, it would not be necessary to set up independent tribunals. But I suppose it is a case of six of one and half a dozen of the other. Whether it is an additional body which is appointed from time to time to investigate an accident as it pertains to safety, or whether the CTC Air Transport Committee does it, it still must be done in each case. However, I believe that the establishment of an independent tribunal for each separate incident or accident would mean a much greater cost, unless the CTC was to maintain a permanent staff which would have the expertise to analyse and keep records about incidents and accidents, so that as and when a tribunal is appointed a staff would be immediately available to it. Those people would then become part of the staff of the tribunal, rather than of the Canadian Transport Commission.

A former Minister of Transport, Jean-Luc Pepin, and myself, were the only two members on the committee who opposed the degree of deregulation which was being suggested by the Government of that day and supported by members of the Conservative Party. I took issue with this for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that deregulation in the areas in which it has occurred is nothing more than a return to, or an appeal to, mediocrity. We are now in the situation where air fares are cheaper for some people in some places and more costly for some people in other places. Service to isolated, small and medium-sized communities, as I predicted, has