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Bilingual air traffic control: Quebecois says it's safe

By ILAN SALAMON

J. L. Patenaude, Quebec Regional Director of the Canadian Air Traffic Controllers (CATCA) and a member of Les Gens de l'Air du Québec, spoke to a sparsely attended but lively meeting on Friday, February 25.

The issue was the dispute over bilingual air traffic control in Quebec airports, an issue that set off an air transportation crisis last summer and a walkout by the Canadian Air Line Pilots Association (CALPA).

About 20 people attended the meeting sponsored by CYSF and the Young Socialists. The speech was recorded by CITY TV, Global, CBC and CKEY.

Patenaude has a controversial background. On July 14, 1976 the executive of CATCA suspended him for six months for stating his intention to form a breakaway organization for Quebec air traffic controllers.

Patenaude gave a brief history of the conflict between the Gens de l'Air, who favour bilingual air

traffic control at Dorval, Mirabel and St. Hubert airports (it is presently being used at five small Quebec airports), and CATCA and CALPA who opposes such a measure, claiming that safety is the only issue.

Patenaude cited two recommendations from the ICAO (the International Civil Aviation Organization), one stating that air-ground communications should be conducted in the language used by the station on the ground (recommendation 52111) and another stipulating that English should be available on request from any aircraft unable to comply with 52111. Despite the recommendations Canada has set its own rules, stipulating that air-ground communications be in English, and that only in case of emergency could French be used.

This attitude is based "solely on tradition" said Patenaude. The problem lies in the fact that many private aircraft pilots in Quebec don't speak English, and must

communicate in French by Quebec air traffic controllers. Despite federal studies showing the need for bilingual air traffic communications in Quebec and its safety, the government has shelved such reports, said Patenaude.

The only way of solving the problem is "by communicating with pilots or keeping them on the ground".

In the audience were several Air Canada pilots who claimed that they were not sent by CALPA, but strongly challenged Patenaude.

One pilot claimed that the Gens de l'Air do not have the support they claim to have. "The whole thing has been distorted," he said. He also said that all non-English countries use English in air traffic control.

The fact is that in France all airports are bilingual, and at the de Gaulle airport, where 60 per cent of the traffic is handled in French, the use of two works smoothly. Patenaude said that the pilot's facts were distorted, and as the pilot interjected the meeting began to get lively.

Another Air Canada pilot told Patenaude, "I'm pretty upset with you and your people". He was upset that Air Canada pilots are being perceived as "racists and bigots". "The issue is safety", he claimed.

Both CATCA and CALPA are anglophone dominated.

He then questioned Patenaude as to his personal flying experience while members of the audience yelled this was unfair. The pilot then cited examples where he had overheard clearance of other planes and had averted an accident. "We listen to every clearance given to aircraft," he stated. Patenaude criticized the idea that the basic criteria of safety be based on a pilot overhearing other pilots, but the Air Canada pilot replied, "we do it every day".

Arguments between the pilots and Patenaude continued in what had become a heated meeting. The pilots claimed that "this is not against you or your French Canadian pilots". Another member of the audience told the pilots that being unilingual English their mobility is restricted. The pilot replied that politics is not the issue.

In reply to another question Patenaude tried to paraphrase the situation. "You're telling a francophone in his town that he'll have to speak English to fly to Baie Comeau". It's the same as having to speak French to fly out of Vancouver, he said.



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Spock bars return

SAN FRANCISCO (ZNS-CUP) — The only thing standing between millions of Star Trek fans and a full-length movie about the crew of the Starship Enterprise is Mister Spock.

Leonard Nimoy, the actor who played the part of Spock from the planet Vulcan in the popular TV series, is the only contract hold-out for Paramount's \$8 million movie version of Star Trek.

The program's creator, Gene Roddenbury, predicts that Nimoy

will sign up soon, and that shooting on the inter-galactic adventure will begin by early summer.

If Nimoy does sign, the Star Trek movie will include the entire original cast from the old television series.

However, there's still a problem with the final script. Roddenbury submitted one plot in which the Enterprise encounters a powerful, nebulous entity in space which claims it is God. Paramount believes that plot is too controversial and is having it rewritten.

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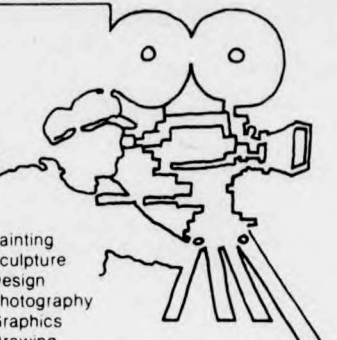
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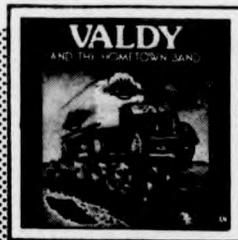
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