

Statements by Ministers

No nation is immune to the scourge of terrorism. Two innocent Canadians now join the list of victims of this international brutality. The Government of Canada condemns the hijacking of the Egyptian airliner and profoundly regrets the tragic loss of life which ensued. This most recent incident again demonstrates the urgent need for concerted international action to combat acts of terrorism. The Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) raised this issue before the United Nations General Assembly. The Minister of Transport (Mr. Mazankowski) has proposed changes affecting international air travel.

With our friends and allies Canada is pursuing other concrete measures to combat terrorism. Senior officials of my Department will be meeting in Bonn on December 10 and 11 to continue consultations with our Summit Seven partners. We will continue to pursue vigorously all available means to eliminate the scourge of terrorism and to bring to justice the perpetrators of these brutal acts.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Saint-Maurice): Mr. Speaker, I wish to join the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) in offering, as I already said during oral question period, my sincere condolences to the bereaved family.

I agree with the Secretary of State for External Affairs that this is a phenomenon that is becoming increasingly widespread, and we can no longer consider ourselves immune to this kind of occurrence. Here in Canada, we thought we were entirely immune to this kind of violence, but not long ago, the airport in Toronto was used in what increasingly appears to have been a similar act of violence, when an Air India jet crashed in the North Atlantic and another similar tragedy occurred at the airport in Tokyo, in connection with a plane coming in from Vancouver. This is not just an international problem, and I agree with the Secretary of State for External Affairs that it is a very difficult question and one that is becoming more and more apparent, even in Canada.

I am glad to see that the Minister of Transport (Mr. Mazankowski) is listening with the Secretary of State for External Affairs, because two Canadian lives were lost on the island of Malta on the week-end. However, only a few months ago, a very large number of Canadians lost their lives in the North Atlantic. The impression now seems to be that the disaster was even worse than a hijacking, since there were ammunition and explosives on board the Air India plane.

Of course, international action is extremely important. We must pursue the policy of refusing to offer asylum to persons who resort to this kind of violence.

[English]

I think it is extremely important that asylum not be given to any of these people. When I was Minister of Finance and attended the Bonn Summit, we were already discussing this matter. We had a full session on international terrorism. I think we have succeeded somewhat in that there are now very

few countries, if any, which will welcome hijackers and give them asylum. It is of fundamental importance that people who get involved in these tragic events know that there is no place they can land safely anymore. I hope the lesson of last weekend will help to deter some people.

However, we must ensure that these people cannot get on planes anymore. I think that was the problem in Athens last weekend. That airport has been subject to many such incidents. I think we should put pressure on the Greek Government. Over the weekend some people in France were advocating that we should cut transportation to these airports by Canadian planes if Canadian citizens are to be safe. However, we cannot give lessons to anyone else if we are faced with the same problem in Canada. I know that the Government of Canada and the Minister of Transport (Mr. Mazankowski) will be dedicated to curing this problem which does exist in Canada. The other day there were some—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I do this with great regret, but I think the Hon. Member knows that responses are to be approximately the same length as the original statement. I am going to ask the Hon. Member for Saint-Maurice (Mr. Chrétien) if he could conclude briefly.

Mr. Chrétien: Yes, I will conclude. I have made my point and everyone understood where I was going. I just want to say that this is a very serious problem. This is the type of issue on which we should work together, because loss of life should not lead to political confrontation. Therefore, let us find a solution in Canada as quickly as possible.

Ms. Pauline Jewett (New Westminster-Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the New Democratic Party I wish to join the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) in expressing our very deep sympathy to the family and friends of Mrs. Leonard and her infant son who lost their lives in this very great tragedy. As the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) said earlier today, we cannot second guess the wisdom of the Egyptian decision, nor should we now assume that all the blame should rest on the Athens airport. There is nothing conclusive about that and I was distressed to hear such a suggestion.

● (1510)

At the same time, as the Minister has noted, we must make an urgent and concerted international effort to find solutions to this horrendous problem of international terrorism. At the close of his statement, the Minister said that we will be acting with our friends and allies. Since I do not know how broad that phrase is, I hope he also means that we will be acting with all members of the United Nations who are concerned about the very great growth in international terrorism.

I will discuss with my colleagues the possibility of striking a subcommittee of the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence to assist the Minister in this matter in any possible way.