

Oral Questions

appoint them with terms of reference. I will certainly make them available to the House at the first opportunity.

SUGGESTED EMPHASIS ON SAFETY OF BILINGUAL AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL—DISCUSSION WITH CONTROLLERS ON TERMS OF REFERENCE OF COMMISSIONER

Mr. Donald W. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, I have another supplementary question. In light of the minister's answers, I was wondering whether there were discussions with CALPA and the controllers as to the terms of reference, and in particular that the commissioner or commissioners be directed to place priority on the question of safety? In addition, when can the minister receive the views of this House and its members and the representations of the public of Canada on a question in respect of which the public of Canada is very interested as well?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the very purpose of the commission is to assure the Canadian public that safety has been put foremost. That has been consistently our position. I believe it to be fair to say that it is the likely position of all parties in this House to put safety first, but also be prepared to proceed with some bilingual air traffic control in the province of Quebec where that can be done consistent with safety, and where this has been demonstrated at certain airports where it has taken place. I say I believe that to be the position of all parties in the House, and I would appreciate specific approval in that regard from all parties so it can be known by the public in this country that this is a very limited course of action we have taken, and that the suggestion which seems to be carried abroad from time to time that somehow there is a threat to safety because French is flying fast and free over Winnipeg and Calgary is simply not the case, and that those who are concerned about making it sound as though that is the case are in fact engaging in some unfortunate blackmail.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

CONSULTATIONS WITH CONTROLLERS ON APPOINTMENT OF COMMISSIONER TO INVESTIGATE SAFETY OF BILINGUAL TRAFFIC CONTROL

Mr. Don Mazankowski (Vegreville): Mr. Speaker, may I simply remind the minister that we on this side of the House have directed our questions to the question of safety and safety alone. Arising out of an answer the parliamentary secretary gave the House yesterday to the effect that there had been rather regular communication with all parties interested in the decision which is to be taken regarding the naming of a commissioner, I would ask the Minister of Transport whether he can clarify this statement, in light of the fact that the President of CATCA, Mr. Livingston, stated that his only contact with the Ministry of Transport occurred on June 8 in respect of naming a replacement for Mr. Keenan, and again last Friday, at which time he had informal discussions with the deputy minister of personnel, and during which there were no references to the appointment of a new commissioner?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the discussions between the officials of the Ministry of

[Mr. Lang.]

Transport and the various groups involved, the pilots and controllers, are going on from time to time, and practically continuously. Obviously the question of commissioners is very much foremost, so I do not understand if there is supposed to be some hesitancy on the part of the controllers and pilots to bring forward comments on the question of the commission and commissioners. We did in fact ask them for suggestions, but we have received very limited help in that regard. Indeed, the latest word I have is that there is some lack of interest in the commission because they seem to be taking the position that the only thing they will be satisfied with is a move away from the position which we have taken, when we have always said that safety comes first with bilingualism in certain areas within the province of Quebec when possible. Notwithstanding that, I have to take the position with them that backing down from this reasonable position is something we cannot do. As I say, I believe we have the support of reasonable members of all parties in this House in that regard.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that the appointment of a new commissioner seems to be the central issue involved in this dispute, and in view of the fact there have not been any formalized meetings with officials of the Department of Transport and CATCA, I would ask the minister whether he would undertake to convene a meeting with Mr. Livingston and his officials in order that their advice might be sought so that a suitable replacement might be named to head the commission of inquiry which would hopefully avert continued disruption of air traffic in this country?

● (1420)

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, needless to say if I felt there was anything to be gained from a particular form of meeting I would see that it was held immediately. I am indeed always available, my door is always open.

The hon. member is quite wrong in repeating his statement that there had not been any formal consultations. There have been. I have indicated to the hon. member that we asked for lists. We ended up with a list containing one name which is a strange form of helpfulness in the way of suggestions. We asked for further names. We then got an expression of now perhaps some lack of interest in the commission because of a lack of interest in anything which may allow the policy we have set forth to progress. I say to hon. members, and I say it most earnestly, I wish they would take the opportunity of their supplementaries to indicate that they do in fact support the basic policy I have enunciated here.

REQUEST FOR ASSURANCE NO EXTENSION OF BILINGUAL TRAFFIC CONTROL IF SAFETY JEOPARDIZED

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, I also have a question for the Minister of Transport. Since neither his statements in the House today in respect of questions—and I was listening with care—nor his statement of May 12 on the question of bilingualism being introduced to air traffic control procedures in Quebec, nor