

Vancouver International Airport

Thatcher) was very far out of order because, as I understand it, Moose Jaw is not very far from Edmonton—

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Barnett:—and I noticed in a recent press story that one of the first of the CF-100's to come under the jurisdiction of the Minister of National Defence arrived at Comox airport—which happens to be not very far from Vancouver although it is on Vancouver island—in one hour flat. Therefore when we are considering Vancouver international airport we have to realize that in this high speed air age quite a lot of territory can be taken into consideration in any discussion such as we are having now.

I felt somewhat timorous about entering the debate until the hon. member for Moose Jaw-Lake Centre did, because up until that time only members from what we in British Columbia consider to be the lower mainland had participated. While I am a British Columbia member, I certainly do not consider myself to be one of that group, however select an assembly they may consider themselves to be.

However, I do wish to assure the hon. member for Vancouver-Burrard as well as the hon. member for Vancouver East that I would not for one moment decry the great importance of Vancouver international airport. Nevertheless, in rising to support this resolution introduced by the hon. member for Burnaby-Richmond I notice reference has been made to the need for some reassessment of the use of the airport both in relation to civil and military training.

The Minister of National Defence suggested that it is not primarily a training station so far as the Royal Canadian Air Force is concerned. But while the hon. member for Vancouver East was describing the landing of paratroopers at the airport at Sea island it did occur to me that this might be a good time to remind the Minister of National Defence, and perhaps draw to the attention of the Minister of Transport, that there are other airports in British Columbia.

One that comes to my mind is known as the Tofino airport, located at the edge of Long Beach on the west coast of Vancouver island which, if my understanding is correct, cost the taxpayers of Canada several million dollars, and is now lying idle. In fact it is a desolate looking place. Here and there through the cracks in the runways one can see weeds beginning to appear. I must say it is a matter of some regret to me, when I pass that way, to see what was a very substantial investment, made of course under

wartime conditions, going to waste. I was going to suggest that possibly an airport such as that might be a more suitable place to drop paratroopers.

Incidentally I might suggest that it has the attraction of being right alongside one of Canada's finest and most famous beaches. I hasten to assure the Minister of National Defence that I have no intention of raising the much-discussed question of an access road to Tofino. I understand that is being taken care of by the same government about which my hon. friend from New Westminster is so fond of talking. I understand they are going to build a road out to Tofino, or perhaps it is one of our logging companies that is going to build it for them; I do not know.

However, that is something to be taken into consideration. Perhaps if we cannot leave the airports in the cities we can move some of the cities out to the airports; perhaps to Long Beach, or to the fine, expansive airport at Port Hardy on the northern end of Vancouver island.

I feel that, should a more extensive program of training in the R.C.A.F. be contemplated now or in the future, and if the congestion to which reference has been made is going to increase, the facilities on the west coast of Vancouver island should not be overlooked either by the Minister of National Defence or the Minister of Transport in any plans they may be making to implement the resolution so well introduced by the hon. member for Burnaby-Richmond.

Hon. George C. Marler (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I regret I have not yet had the opportunity of revisiting Vancouver and seeing its airport, or of becoming more familiar personally with the problems about which hon. members have spoken tonight. I sincerely hope it will not be long before I shall be able to visit the international airport at Vancouver and see at first hand some of the difficulties and problems mentioned. I think hon. members will realize that the congestion at Vancouver airport is a problem similar to that we have to meet at a number of other major airports in Canada. I just wish it were as simple to provide alternative facilities as it is to suggest that they be provided.

Let me say immediately I realize fully that the international airport at Vancouver is not owned by the crown and operated by the Department of Transport, but that it is owned by the city of Vancouver. Notwithstanding that fact, let me add that in our consideration of the problem we have approached it in much the same way as if the department were wholly responsible for its operation, and as if it were one of the airports owned and operated by my department.

[Mr. Barnett.]