

Supply—Citizenship and Immigration

the government pay on an individual basis for these air passages or does it pay for the complete plane?

Mr. Pickersgill: We pay the inter-governmental committee on refugees, as I understand it, so much per seat whether it is occupied or not, and they have calculated that rate on the basis of all their charters and made the rate based on that. What they pay to the companies I suppose it would be possible for me to find out. But we do not pay the airlines. We pay the intergovernmental committee on refugees.

Mr. Hamilton (York West): I think this is of some importance because at the time of the minister's original announcement there was some publicity that whatever bids were received from Canadian companies were certainly not lower. I see from the article in this morning's *Globe and Mail* that a DC-4 of Flying Tiger Airlines landed at Vancouver with 46 Hungarians and 29 Britons, making a total of 75 passengers. I think you will find that the ordinary seating configuration of a DC-4, certainly from the standpoint of what would be satisfactory to the licensing authorities in Canada, is somewhere between 64 and 68.

If these bids were received on a per plane basis and competitors are sticking 75 people in a plane, as I say, I do not think our licensing authorities would be very happy about it. Of course, Canadian companies making bids on the basis of the ordinary seating capacity of anywhere from 64 to 68 could not possibly come within the price range quoted by these other lines in making their bids. I hope this is not the prospect for the future. I have heard that even more people may be put in these planes. I heard a figure of 80 the other day as a possibility. If that is the case, then it would appear that as far as air transport is concerned we are getting back to the jammed steerages in which immigrants were brought to this country years ago.

From the safety standpoint I believe we might raise the same objection. I certainly do not think the government of Canada wants to become involved in an airlift where people are going to be stuffed into planes like cattle, no matter how anxious they may be to get them here. I would be most interested to learn from the minister what the actual details of the contracts were. They may be between an international agency and the carriers but I think we should know the details and whether the contracts were on a per passenger basis or on a charter of a plane basis.

[Mr. Hamilton (York West).]

I should also like to know from the minister if a check has been made with the Department of Transport with respect to whether the planes being used in the airlift and the seating capacity meet with the requirements of the department. I think we should have this information on both these points. If the circumstances in connection with the bidding are as I believe they are, I certainly think we should not leave any inference that Canadian companies are making much higher bids.

Mr. Pickersgill: As to the two points the hon. gentleman raised, the carriers satisfied both the air transport board and the Department of Transport. Otherwise they would not have been allowed to land. So far as Canadian companies are concerned, it was the view both of my department and of the treasury that they should be utilized where possible. The government therefore authorized me to make an offer to any Canadian airline that could satisfy the requirements of the Department of Transport and the air transport board as to flying the Atlantic that we would take any planes they could provide for the transport of Hungarians from the United Kingdom and possibly from France if they would meet the rates that Canadian Pacific and Maritime Central respectively were quoting for the west and east coast. That seemed to me an eminently fair offer and I think it is probable that one or two Canadian lines are going to be able to meet the offer.

It is a more advantageous arrangement than the one we have made with these other people and it is one I would not offer to any but Canadian carriers. However, I did feel that we wanted to make use of any Canadian carriers there were. Perhaps I might say a word to the committee about the basis of the rates that Maritime Central and Canadian Pacific quote to us. The rate is almost the precise equivalent of the sea and rail rates to the respective places so that the taxpayer is losing nothing, and the airline companies feel that they can carry this kind of passenger, the Hungarians who have very little luggage, at that rate and do it profitably.

It seemed to me that this business, which was better business than the other airlift, should be given to the Canadian lines and that as to the other business we should get the immigrants moved here at the lowest rate consistent with safety and all these other considerations. In the case of Canadian Pacific and Maritime Central we are paying the fares for the carriage of Hungarians but in the case of the air bridge from the United Kingdom, although we may be lending the money, in the long run the