

This Bill was read for the first time in the previous session on July 8, 1988. At that time the Minister stated: "The National Transportation Act—places safety at the top of our list of objectives. The Government takes this commitment seriously—". That was a very honourable statement, Madam Speaker. However, since that time Canadians have learned that the Government did not take that commitment seriously. Since then we have learned of the serious shortage of air traffic controllers at Canadian airports, the ironic shortage of inspectors for large commercial aircraft, the controversy over the cause of the Gander crash, the Government's inability to offset the dangerous effects of deregulation, the Dryden crash, and other serious shortfalls.

We can only hope today that the Government is serious about committing itself to high safety standards for Canadians, and is not about to generate more rhetoric without action. The safety of Canadian travellers is far too vital to be mishandled in any way. It is far too vital for political games to be played with the safety of Canadians.

We could go on and on about the Government's negligent mishandling of air safety. It is well documented and requires an immediate remedy on several fronts. Today, our attention is focused on transportation accident investigation and the new Bill C-2 presently before the House.

The Liberal Party of Canada believes that the Government is making a serious mistake by rushing this Bill through the House before Mr. Justice Willard Estey has had an opportunity to review the record of investigation into the circumstances surrounding the Gander crash.

We say this because Mr. Justice Estey's review may—and I use the word "may"—result in a recommendation to the Minister for a judicial inquiry which would have a profound impact on aviation accident investigation, and subsequently on Bill C-2.

In the same manner that the Dubin inquiry preceded the Canadian Aviation Safety Board Act of 1984 whose recommendations form the backbone of that piece of legislation, we strongly believe that a full judicial commission of inquiry into the Gander crash should, by all reasonableness, precede this legislation. Only in this manner can we establish an accident investigation agency that will promote safety in Canada to maximum efficiency,

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and operate on a day-to-day basis with the least possible opportunity for dissension to arise.

We believe that for reasons of covering up certain compromising events, the Government has refused to call a judicial inquiry over the last several months, and now it is clearly caught in a situation of putting the cart before the horse. From the very beginning of its mandate, the Government has not listened to the people. From day one it has had a hidden agenda, an agenda to sell us out to the Americans. However, in this incident when Americans were killed on Canadian soil, the Government even failed them and their surviving relatives. No effort, no expense, and no fear should have prevented a calm, thorough, and orderly investigation of the crash at Gander.

This Bill should go back to the drawing board. It should be redrafted from a to z. If it is not, it will have a very turbulent flight through the committee stage. We in the Official Opposition will not let this slipshod travesty of a Bill go forward in its present form.

Someone has done a snow job on the Minister. This Bill is designed to be unworkable. The entire Board is a mirage. The investigator is responsible to himself, and the latest government attempt by Mr. Justice Estey's inquiry is not likely to produce much new information because, by his terms of reference, Mr. Estey is not allowed to look at any new information. Again, it looks like a whitewash.

No new information will be heard from anyone. I think that that is important. Who does the Government think it is kidding? Canadians are entitled to better than this from the Minister and the Government.

While the Minister's words were laudatory in his presentation of Bill C-2 on second reading, I would strongly urge him to take the advice of other people to go back to the drawing board and to call a judicial inquiry into the Gander crash, and start over and draft a Bill that will in fact make it possible for Canadians again to have confidence in the air and on the ground.

• (1200)

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Madam Speaker, I wish to start my contribution to the debate on Bill C-2 by apologizing to the Minister and my colleague, the Hon. Member for Miramichi (Mr. Dionne), for not being here for the Minister's full presentation and the first half of the Hon. Member's presentation. The