

document that would help provide a solution to the Mirabel-Dorval problem. Furthermore, the minister promised before you, Mr. Speaker, to hand down a decision within the next three months.

Well, Mr. Speaker, on May 14, only a few days ago, I asked the Minister of Transport once again when we would be getting a decision. This evening, I see it as my duty to tell the House, as the representative of the people of Mirabel, the riding of Argenteuil-Papineau and the entire area north of Montreal, that mayors cannot make decisions and plan for their municipal operations because they are still waiting for a decision on what is going to happen to Mirabel. I am not asking the minister to tell me which flights he is going to transfer. I am asking for a decision on Mirabel. Mr. Speaker, It seems to me that I am not asking for the moon. All my North Shore colleagues have put pressure on the minister. All my North Shore colleagues have asked the minister for a reply, and this evening again I must address the Minister of Transport, through you, Mr. Speaker, and tell him: For heaven's sake, Mr. Minister, people have been waiting for a decision for ten years. After all, the government built the airport. It has been called a white elephant. It has been called all sorts of names, but Mr. Speaker, the people have a right to a decision on this issue, and it is this decision I am asking for, and I am asking for a decision as soon as possible.

● (2205)

[English]

Mr. Douglas Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I would like once again to extend my congratulations to the hon. member for his perseverance and his sensitivity on a very controversial and difficult subject. All of us know he is impatient for an answer. We have heard his comments in the past. We sympathize with him, and by no means are we trying now to make any further difficulty either for him or for the people he represents. Instead, all of us feel it is important to come to a decision, as he has asked.

It is equally important to come to the right decision, and that involves a long and often complicated process. It is a very difficult matter involving interests which go in all directions. Simple desire for speed does not always result in a satisfactory solution. I think we have to have adequate evidence that all parties have been heard and that all the cases have been aired.

I would like to say, just as a quick side note, that I believe the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) is one minister who pays very close attention to all sides of a case. On the one hand, he is not afraid to come to grips with issues but, on the other hand, he does so in a way which allows all parties to express their feelings. Certainly the Mirabel case is one instance in which this is happening. The Crow rate case in the west is another.

Mr. Fraser: VIA Rail was another.

Adjournment Debate

Mr. Fisher: Whether it is with respect to transportation of dangerous goods, harbours policy, air policy—

Mr. Fraser: VIA Rail.

Mr. Fisher:—or a wide range of other policies, we have seen this minister come to grips with very difficult issues and do so in a sensitive and democratic fashion.

It is precisely that pattern of behaviour I want to remind the hon. member is going on here. I appreciate the hon. member's impatience. I think he is doing an outstanding job in raising this issue in such a persistent way. At the same time I hope he too will recognize the need the minister has to be sensitive and democratic in his decision-making process.

SEARCH AND RESCUE—TAX EXEMPTION SOUGHT FOR WEST COAST HELICOPTER. (B) POSITION OF MINISTER

Hon. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South): Mr. Speaker, some time ago a volunteer society in British Columbia, which has been working to establish a competent and efficient coast mountain rescue operation, purchased, with funds raised by volunteers, an American helicopter which was fitted out for mountain rescue and capable not only of helping to find people lost in the coast mountains but also of transporting them out, whether they are injured or not. The cost of this helicopter was \$200,000. When the society had the helicopter at the border, the government moved in. The excise branch of the federal Department of National Revenue initiated a charge of \$16,000 on the helicopter being brought into Canada. Of course, the volunteer society protested and said, "Why is this tax being imposed on this aircraft when aircraft for public use do not have that tax imposed on them?" In its intransigence the government said that the law—or the regulations; it has never made it very clear—do not allow any room to manoeuvre.

As a consequence of public attention and that of Members of Parliament, myself included, being brought to the matter, and of having written to the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Rompkey) asking whether this was as a consequence of statute law, regulation or government directive, we received the answer from the Minister of National Revenue that it was the law. He did not provide very much definition as to where the law was found, but that was the law, and nothing could be done.

In answer to a question I asked the other day the minister said:

I recognize that it does a valuable job—

That is, the society.

—but I am afraid under the present circumstances we have gone as far as we can in responding to it.

● (2210)

The fact is that the minister has not responded to this. All the minister has done is to say that whatever the law is he cannot change it. He has not addressed the central question in this issue and that is, what is the opinion of the government? Should this be taxed or should it not? What public purpose is