

*Aeronautics Act*

That is the purpose, Mr. Speaker, of Bill C-128. We now have an arrangement and it was agreed with the airlines that it would be temporary, that is to say that the companies expected that by the end of March we would be in a position to take the responsibility as a government, to search individuals and luggage when necessary at airports. We also want major airports to be protected physically, that is by fences, to prevent anybody from coming in either to threaten the lives of people and to board a plane to threaten the pilot or the passengers.

Bill C-128 is nothing new. That power is being given by the federal government. As to the way we proceed there are all sorts of complications, one of them being cost. Of course, airlines are not interested in paying for the wages of the security officers who must search people and luggage. We are studying how we may share these costs, and the experience of these last two or three months will probably show us how to distribute these costs between the federal government and airline companies.

Some people might fear that the federal government or its agencies may abuse this power. Of course, each time such a power is granted to the government, there is a danger of misuse but if we are asking for this power, it is for a reason. A very small number of Canadians are opposed to it. As far as I am concerned, I have never been informed that people object to being searched. Canadians know that we act this way not to impinge on their freedom, but to protect their fundamental freedom, their lives.

That is the reason of the search and we do not want to perpetuate the present system, because it is essentially temporary and has been voluntarily accepted by the airlines. At present, they defray the costs, but we think that under the Aeronautics Act, the federal government should have such powers.

The R.C.M.P. is training people especially to perform this work. Officers will thus be assigned to airports and they will try to prevent the persons I referred to earlier from boarding the aircraft. It is clear that they will not achieve 100 per cent success; perhaps other accidents will occur in the future, but what we are trying to do is to decrease their number so that Canadians or foreigners travelling aboard Canadian aircraft will enjoy maximum security.

Eventually, if this results in a certain amount of abuse, we know that we could use other democratic methods; the Parliament is in Ottawa, the members of Parliament and the government are still there. We will try to prevent any abuse if ever some occur. We are now giving special training to avoid harassment so that inconvenience does not result in provocation or an intolerable embarrassment for all passengers.

Mr. Speaker, that is the purpose of Bill C-128; we are only confirming what is done at the present time to maintain the procedure, but in a better way through specially trained agents.

● (1740)

[*English*]

**Mr. R. Gordon L. Fairweather (Fundy-Royal):** Mr. Speaker, I think the minister would agree that there is still something pretty good about the fact that searches, no  
[Mr. Marchand (Langelier).]

matter whether they are for our safety or for the safety of others, have to be by statute and not by government fiat or some sort of administrative decision. I think this is a very reassuring and comforting thing about this issue. Once again, though, we find ourselves in contemporary times really having to revert to the middle ages, and the highwayman of stagecoach days has become, if I can say so, the skywayman of the jet age.

Speaking personally, I am particularly glad that most of us being searched are still somewhat embarrassed by the whole procedure, still uncomfortable about it and still not sure whether to say please or thank you when the geiger-counter goes up and down various layers of largesse, speaking personally. I think this, too, is a healthy sign and I would hate to see the day when this embarrassment about the whole search process becomes somewhat institutionalized in our system with officials, rather than being embarrassed as they search, becoming officious and grim faced, with us just thinking this is one more routine procedure. I, for one, will never accept the fact that it is a routine procedure to be searched because I want to go from this parliament to my constituency, or some other Canadian or anybody else wants to go around the world on his private business or private occasion, to put it more eloquently or elegantly. I am glad, therefore, that the minister has to bring this issue before us in the form of a statute and that we have to debate it.

Some may think the line I have taken is on the philosophical side. I do not intend it to be. I rather think it is one of the ironies of our age that we have the technical ability to get from point "A" to point "B" rather quickly, but we have not yet found a way to do it safely because of the vagaries of other people in the world. Earlier, I raised the civil liberties matter, and whether the searchers might be persuaded, and perhaps that is not the right word, or fall into the trap of carrying out a sort of general fishing expedition. Really, what they are doing is insuring our safety; they are not vetting our reading material, and I hope they are not looking for other things. There are other methods that can be used by the police and law enforcement agencies.

This is an inconvenience about which we are all slightly embarrassed but that we accept, I suppose, with the rather selfish idea that the safety of many of us and our fellows is involved. Speaking personally, and I hope others would agree, I hope that we will always be nervous about it and slightly embarrassed, because when we take it as routine then I think we will have lost a very precious part of our liberty.

**Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand) pointed out, just at a time when technicians seemed to have assured reasonable safety in the air, at least from a mechanical point of view, we find ourselves faced with this tragedy of air piracy and other threats to the lives of those who travel by air. The result is that some method does seem to be necessary to protect the safety of passengers and flight personnel, and on that basis we are prepared to agree to second reading of this bill so it can be referred to the appropriate standing committee.

I am particularly pleased that the hon. member for Fundy-Royal (Mr. Fairweather) made the statement he