

Canadian Aviation Safety Board

serious aviation accidents. Maybe we in the House are a little bit guilty of blowing them out of proportion at times. It is unfortunate that we must do that in order to catch attention and gain a freer flow of information on matters that concern us and the people we represent.

It still strikes me that the most dangerous part of flying, as the old adage says, is driving to the airport. Per passenger mile, we should probably be spending much money and effort on highway safety, or at least the equivalent, where costs for damage, death and injury are astronomical. Nevertheless, air safety is vitally important. More and more people fly. The Bill before us today is a start in the right direction. It is extremely unfortunate that the Government has chosen to move in this manner and that it is intending to push the Bill through all stages today without allowing consultation with other affected groups which would provide very valuable input.

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Dartmouth-Halifax East): Mr. Speaker, when I first raised, in this Chamber, the question of separating the departmental regulatory responsibilities from those of its investigative arm back in 1967, some 16 years ago, I thought that perhaps the wisdom of simply removing any potential reason to believe conflict of interest might arise or could arise would in fact occur to Government and to Members of Parliament and that very shortly we might resolve the matter. But by 1968 or 1969, nothing had happened. By 1970, nothing had happened.

Therefore I took it upon myself to consult with the transportation industry in Canada. Without exception, as the Minister is aware, everyone agreed that there should be our a priori independent commission to consider transportation occurrences. I remind the House of interprovincial transport of gas and oil, the possibility of moving grain by pipelines, all the way through to the operations of ferries in our country, air transport, trucking—the whole range of transport that falls under or is touched upon one way or another by federal regulation. It still needs the attention of this Chamber. Thirteen years is too long to achieve one-third of the required independence that will not only aid transportation so it is seen to be safe but to in fact be safe. The surface mode and marine mode remain to be dealt with.

● (1210)

I accept the work of Justice Dubin because it was necessary. His report was very much to the point and told Canadians of the horror story in flying. While pilots occasionally tell us that flying involves hours of boredom, the beginning of these flights hold moments of terror and there are always moments of terror at their end. The same is quite true for passengers except they are not quite as aware of the terror. That same terror still exists in the minds of people who travel on our trains, highways and ferries and in those who work on our ships.

If it has taken us 13 years or longer to achieve an independent commission with respect to air travel, I must ask if we must wait another 13 years for marine transport and then another 13 years for similar commissions with respect to surface transport. The Minister is correct that this new body

will provide a good learning experience for us in this country. However, we have had 13 years to learn. Indeed we have had 100 years to learn about transportation.

As far as removing any question of conflict of interest is concerned, we should be taking action today on the three primary modes of transportation in this country. I accept the fact that this legislation represents a first step. I am pleased to join with my colleague for Prince Edward-Hastings (Mr. Ellis) and my friend for Comox-Powell River (Mr. Skelly) in welcoming what I hope is just the first step. As I have suggested, if we must wait another 13 years for a similar piece of legislation dealing with marine safety, then what will become of the lessons that we will learn from Mr. Justice Hickman's inquiry into the *Ocean Ranger* disaster currently taking place in Newfoundland? Will we have to wait another ten years after his report before we determine that there is a need for independence of investigation in that area of transportation as it relates to safety, minimum requirements, construction, operation, repair and inspection?

We know what Judge Hugessen said in his report on the shipboard fire which occurred Christmas Eve, 1981. We know the contents of another judge's report with respect to the accident involving dangerous gases which occurred in urban Toronto approximately four years ago. Why has action not been taken on these recommendations? I am sure the Minister is aware of this concern because he has acknowledged the urgency to take action.

There are many questions to be asked. The Hon. Member for Comox-Powell River has related some areas with which he is concerned. He has stated his concern that members of the general aviation community in this country will not have an opportunity to deal with the issues in detail. I share that concern and I am also concerned about how the Board will be able to fulfil its mandate within the parameters of this Act within a completely independent milieu. I am not satisfied that it will happen.

Notwithstanding that, this Bill does represent a giant step toward safety in Canadian skies and I therefore must welcome this legislation. I hope that it will provide the experience to form the basis of similar pieces of legislation dealing with maritime and surface transportation matters. To do anything less on our part would be irresponsible.

Justice Dubin, in recommending this step, did not preclude and indeed suggested that similar legislation respecting the other two modes of transportation might very well produce the same type of thrust. My concern is that I do not want to wait another 12 years and another 12 years after that for similar legislation. I do not see any reason why we cannot establish an a priori independent body which would have that first responsibility in all areas.

When dealing with this legislation this afternoon, I hope we will have an opportunity to deal with it clause by clause so that I may ask questions that concern me. I was concerned about certain questions when I drafted a multimodal bill very similar to this legislation in the 1960s. I am sure those questions will