

*Aeronautics Act*

fly on instruments, all you have to do is slip across the border—and in the air the border is not very visible—and fly on instruments in the United States. In this way you by-pass the Canadian fixed base operators and deprive them of income from which they would benefit.

Canadian aviation has the potential to expand and improve considerably, but it will not do so if we are faced with restrictive and prohibitive rules such as those this department continually tries to impose.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner):** Order, please. I regret to inform the hon. member that his allotted time has expired. He may continue with unanimous consent.

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

● (2142)

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I should like to wrap up my comments with one more sentence and say that it is not helpful for me or any other pilot not to be allowed to use the facilities that are already there. Certainly using those facilities would be of benefit to all pilots. We are back to the adversary role which the department is continually playing. It would be of benefit to us to have the opportunity to review the regulations as they come up. This would not involve all the regulations but only those which are in need of review, those which are not in the best interests of general aviation.

**Mr. Cecil Smith (Churchill):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise tonight to speak on the amendment to Bill C-4 proposed by the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski), who has put a lot of work into the communications aspect of the work before the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications. Even though I am not a member of that committee, I have followed very closely developments in the aviation business in Canada, particularly since I come from a constituency which depends exclusively on aircraft to link us with many of the more remote communities. Some 25 to 30 communities in northern Manitoba alone depend exclusively on aircraft to service them, and if we looked across Canada we would find the same situation in Saskatchewan and in the Northwest Territories.

In speaking to the amendment I should like to point out some of the problems that we experience daily in air transportation and the confusing situation in which the operators find themselves. I will give hon. members a brief history of what has happened and I will use Manitoba as an example. Back in 1966 the then provincial Conservative government under Duff Roblin made a commitment that by 1970, Manitoba's centennial, every community of 100 persons or more would have an emergency airstrip. Prior to that time the 25 to 30 isolated communities in the north were serviced solely by float equipped aircraft in the summertime which would land on lakes adjacent to the communities. In the wintertime ski equipped aircraft landed on lakes. Anyone who has landed on a frozen lake in the wintertime, a lake covered with snow drifts, will know that it is a pretty hazardous operation. Many

[Mr. Ellis.]

times the pilot actually risks his life and those of his passengers as well as risking damage to the aircraft.

Thus the decision was made to build emergency airstrips in the communities so as to enable pilots to service them and to take patients out to hospitals in larger centres, most of the remote communities being equipped only with small nursing stations with perhaps one nurse on staff. The airstrips were located in various communities without too many engineering services. There were fellows like myself who worked for the department in the province of Manitoba. We went out to those places, located suitable communities in need of an airstrip and found a site with free approaches, no obstacles in the way at either end. We always tried to pick an airstrip facing the prevailing winds.

Over a period of five to six years we had airstrips in most communities in northern Manitoba. They were classed only as emergency landing strips, a maximum of 2,000 feet long. This is when the Department of Transport arrived on the scene. Prior to that time these airstrips were classed only as emergency airstrips, but with the aviation industry in the north expanding in leaps and bounds and communities increasing in population, the demand for air travel also increased.

What happened then was that many of the operators in the north switched from ski to wheel operation. In many cases pilots landing on shorter airstrips considered the operation safe enough, but in the view of the Department of Transport the standard was not met in those operations. Their requirements in the north were the same as for Mirabel or the airports at Toronto or Winnipeg. The communities in the north had to have the same standards as were in the rest of the country.

This created havoc in the aviation industry and in the service to the various communities because the type of regulations that were being imposed prior to the involvement of MOT were the concern of the province of Manitoba. A certain set of criteria was arrived at with regard to the placement of terminal buildings, the approaches, the grading required, the width of the landing strip and the clearing and the distance required for a DC-3, a Twin Otter, a single engine Beaver or an Aztec or whatever type of aircraft might be landing in that community. We received specifications from DOT, as it was named then, and we tried to stick to them in the construction of the airstrips.

But lo and behold, after we made some 25 airstrips usable—we had not spent the amount of money which was probably required by DOT because their planning involved engineering studies, engineers on site and so on, and we did not have the funds to put into that type of construction—officials of the Department of Transport made a swing through northern Manitoba in 1975, checked all the airports and decided to close the following airstrips in northern Manitoba: Poplar River, St. Theresa Point, Oxford House, Red Sucker Lake, and Little Grand Rapids. These communities are isolated and the only way to reach them is by aircraft.

Certain specifications were set down which had to be met before these five airstrips could be licensed for certain air carriers, but because of the remoteness of these communities,