

Oral Questions

Canada will be allowed to do their own inspections and certify them, which is like putting a coyote in charge of the chicken coop, will the Minister see to it that the Government does not try to get by on the cheap, that it hires enough inspectors to do it itself, and does not leave it up to the airlines to judge themselves?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I am very surprised because the Hon. Member is an experienced Member of the House of Commons. He should know that we have done this since 1968. For the last 20 years the companies have had the right, under inspection by Transport Canada, to do what he said, and it is a question, if I understand it, that we should expand that authority to other companies.

The Hon. Member knows full well that those inspections have always been controlled by inspectors of Transport Canada. They are well certified if there is any security problem.

OLDER AIRCRAFT—REQUEST FOR EXHAUSTIVE INSPECTION

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry that the Hon. Minister does not know what his own Department is doing. Those airlines will sign the final authorization on work previously reviewed and approved, whether it is maintenance, repairs, or anything else, and no government inspector need look at it. They will sign it off.

Is the Minister prepared to go through this nonsense of having convertible aircraft where the roof lifts off when a plane is in flight? In light of the experience in the United States and the recent incident in Hawaii, is the Government seeing to it that all aircraft over 10 to 15 years old, Boeing 727s, 737s, DC-9s, and DC-8s, are being exhaustively inspected by government inspectors for metal fatigue, aircraft and fuselage cracks, or is he leaving it up to the airlines to do it?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I wish to repeat what I already said. All those inspections were already done by the companies, with personnel certified by Transport Canada, through licences and operating certificates. Everything is controlled by my Department, and for 20 years we have been doing that. I do not believe that it has to be changed, because it has proven to be effective.

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[Translation]

AIR CANADA

REDUCED IMPORTANCE OF OPERATIONS IN MONTREAL

Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Mr. Speaker, my question is also directed to the Minister of Transport, but concerns another topic. It concerns transfers of Air Canada

flight personnel from Montreal to Toronto. When the Minister was still Minister of State (Transport) three years ago, he was very reassuring. In a statement on January 29, 1985, he said that Air Canada had suspended all transfers related to personnel training and flight operations from Montreal to Toronto. He was very reassuring. He said the process had been stopped, so there would be no turning back. If bilingualism and the French fact at Air Canada must be centred in Montreal, we will make sure that is the case.

Now that the Minister has full control over the Department of Transport, I would like to ask him how he can tolerate the erosion of Air Canada's base in Montreal, as flight personnel transfers to Toronto continue. Is the Minister already acknowledging that privatization will have an impact and that the pilots and the Montreal area will just have to hold their noses and let it happen?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I think the Hon. Member will admit we cannot compare apples and oranges. This has no connection with privatization, which has yet to take effect. Furthermore, I agree that in 1985, I asked Air Canada to put a stop to the transfer of pilot training from Montreal to Toronto. That was done, and Air Canada has not departed from its decision since then. In other words, there have been no transfers with respect to training. If we look at operations, it is true that flights to and from Toronto have increased. Once again, I think the Hon. Member will have to admit that in Toronto, operations have increased by 54 per cent over the last three years. However, what I said in 1985 still applies, namely that Air Canada pilots are still being trained in Montreal, on the same terms that existed at the time.

PILOTS BASED IN MONTREAL—MINISTER'S POSITION

Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Mr. Speaker, it is no fun for people in the Montreal area to see how little clout they have with this Government that has no Minister from the Island of Montreal in Cabinet.

The Minister tells us that much of the training will continue to be done in Montreal, but that people will continue to work elsewhere. And he would like us to accept that.

So I shall ask the Minister what guarantee that pilots can continue to be based in Montreal he will obtain from Air Canada. Fifty were transferred in the last three years. What guarantee can he obtain, especially before privatization takes place?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, first of all, it makes me smile when the Liberal Party says that there is no Minister from the Island of Montreal in the Government. When there were six from Montreal, between 1976 and 1984, Montreal lost almost all its economic development. Even the Prime Minister himself was from Montreal!