

STATEMENTS MADE BY CANADIAN AND UNITED STATES  
GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES

**Mr. George Baker (Gander—Twillingate):** Mr. Speaker, on December 12, the day of the crash, the Pentagon's chief spokesman, Robert Sims, said: "We have no indication of explosions prior to the crash or of hostile action".

On December 12, the day of the crash, White House spokesman, Larry Speakes, said: "No evidence of sabotage or an explosion in flight".

On December 12, the day of the crash, our Minister of Transport said that "we have no indication at all foul play took place".

On December 12, the day of the crash, the U.S. Defence Department said: "There was no evidence of sabotage".

The question that comes to mind in the wake of this instant wave of denials is obvious. How was it possible before there was any investigation at all for the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States to make such emphatic and identical declarations? Was it because the Government of Canada was acting in consort with the Pentagon?

**Mr. Mazankowski:** Nonsense.

**Mr. Holtmann:** Get serious.

**Mr. Baker:** Does the Minister not realize that unless he appoints a Royal Commission or judicial inquiry the Government will be seen to be part of a cover-up to the real cause of the crash in Gander?

**Mr. Blaine A. Thacker (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the Opposition, as they often do, are trying to anticipate a result to get some political benefit themselves.

We have a lawful and legitimate process that takes it out of the political realm and puts it into the hands of professional investigators, supervised by a board. I think we should respect that process that Parliament has set up and which has served us very well.

CANADIAN AVIATION SAFETY BOARD—REPORT OF DISSENSION

**Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe):** Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary just told Parliament that we should respect a professional investigation conducted by an independent board. The former Minister of Transport, the Member for St. John's West, retained one John Sopinka, recently named to the Supreme Court of Canada, to investigate the operation of the independent professional board to which the Parliamentary Secretary just referred.

In a report given to the former Minister of Transport on February 3, 1988, Mr. Sopinka referred to division and conflict within the Board, between the Board Chairman and the Executive Director of the Canadian Aviation Safety Board. He said this:

*Oral Questions*

The result of this dissension is that many members of the Board feel powerless to carry out their mandate. On occasion some of the Board members have been unable to obtain investigation of facts which they consider essential in order to carry out their function.

Given the evidence brought forward to the House by the Member for Gander—Twillingate, and given this damning indictment of the operation of the Canadian Aviation Safety Board, will the Deputy Prime Minister tell us how he can refuse today to grant a full public commission of inquiry into the tragic event that led to the loss of so many lives in Gander, Newfoundland?

• (1425)

**Mr. Blaine A. Thacker (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, it is true there has been a bit of dissension within the CASB, but it is also true, and my friend opposite knows, that the next major initiative of the Government is a Transportation Accident Investigation Board which will complete the whole reorganization of transportation. It will leave the NTA with economic regulatory reform. It will leave the Minister with the minimum safety requirements, and there will be a new Transportation Accident Investigation Board for air, rail, and marine, which will independently investigate any accidents.

It will have the appropriate powers and the appropriate division of responsibility between the board and the professional investigators.

**Mr. Tobin:** Mr. Speaker, what we have just heard from the Parliamentary Secretary is an admission that the Canadian Aviation Safety Board was incompetent to carry out a proper investigation, an admission that conflict existed and that the work of the Board was not being done. That is the report of Mr. Sopinka, now named to the Supreme Court of Canada.

REQUEST FOR PUBLIC INQUIRY

**Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe):** In addition to the reference to the operation of the Board and the conflict within the Board, Mr. Sopinka went on to say in his report to the former Minister of Transport this year, just a few months ago:

Finally the view in the industry is that the competence of the investigators and the quality of their investigations and reports has deteriorated in recent years. Some feel that there is insufficient investigation of human factors and that the board lacks technical expertise . . .

Given this report by John Sopinka to the former Minister of Transport in February, and given the information and evidence brought to the House today by the Hon. Member for Gander—Twillingate, I again ask the Deputy Prime Minister, a former Minister of Transport, given his own statements in 1979, that whenever there was a question, whenever there were mysterious circumstances, whenever there was a lack of public confidence, he called for a full public inquiry, will he call a full public inquiry into this whole sorry mess and tragic loss of life?