

*Estimates*

minister some 4½ months ago. We waited patiently for those terms of reference. They came officially last Thursday, but we have yet to hear the names of the members of the board. One can hope they will be appointed in the very near future. But I suppose we should be grateful that at long last members of the public in the metropolitan Toronto region can make representations to an independent board and put questions to the departmental experts who really advocated this second airport in the first place.

There are a number of problems with the terms of reference, however, and I might refer to them briefly at this time. The first major problem—and it is fundamental, Mr. Speaker—is that these terms of reference are based on a premise that there will be two international airports for Toronto. That is stated very clearly in the first sentence of paragraph 2, which reads:

The primary airport components of the regional air system have been defined as the Toronto International Airport, Malton and the New Toronto International Airport at Pickering.

Mr. Speaker, try as it might, the independent board of examination cannot change that premise. The government has decided. Second, the comment was made by the hon. member for Scarborough West that this was going to be an active board and he was assured by the minister that the terms of reference of the board of examination reflected this fact. Mr. Speaker, this is utter and patent nonsense. This board will not be able to perform as an active board, going out to seek evidence; it will sit only as a passive board to hear the submissions and allegations and information brought to it. In the absence of anyone bringing information to it, Mr. Speaker, the board does nothing. That is embedded in the terms of reference. Specifically, in clause 4 it says:

Evidence on the question of airport need and location will be received if forthcoming.

● (2040)

Clearly, that implies that the board is to be passive and not active, and the hon. member for Scarborough West is blind if he suggests otherwise.

Third, the board of examination has no power to subpoena departmental and outside experts who have advocated that this airport be built. So far these backroom people have been the kingpins. They are the ones who persuaded this government, for worse, I suggest, to go ahead with this unnecessary project. There is nothing in these terms of reference that will give the public of the metropolitan Toronto region the right to have these people called before the board. The board is only given power to hear departmental or other witnesses who appear. There is no power to compel them to appear, the implicit suggestion being that the only people who will come before the board from the Department of Transport will be the people that the minister or his department will see fit to send. The experts to be sent will not necessarily be those who have made the decisions. The government may wish to shield them from cross-examination or other forms of inquiries. These people will be protected from that under these terms of reference.

The fourth problem connected with these terms of reference is that there is no guarantee that the government will pay any attention to the recommendations of the board,

[Mr. Atkey.]

once made. If the government were serious about these terms of reference, indeed if it were serious about the board of examination at all, why, may I ask, would it be asking in this year's estimates for \$4.3 million for the construction and design of the Pickering airport? If the government is allegedly prepared to ask the board of examination to consider the crucial question of need, why does it want the money now to construct and design the airport? Surely that proves that the whole idea of an independent inquiry is a charade. It is merely putting off the inevitable in order to placate the restless public in the Toronto region. That is one thing for which we in this party will not stand.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Scarborough West during the question period today made a very good point about this board of examination. In his question to the minister he suggested, inferentially, that the board of examination should have power to commission separate studies related to the planning and the environment. I thought that the suggestion was good. However, there is nothing in these terms of reference that would permit that, and the minister was unable to give a clear answer as to whether that would be the case. I hope the minister might reconsider this and amend the terms of reference so as to take care of this matter.

Mr. Speaker, an element of unnecessary delay has also been introduced into the proceedings of the board. When the minister announced his intention to set up a board of inquiry on January 30 he said it was to report within one year. The people of Toronto were led to believe that it would report on January 30, 1974. Within three months the minister changed his position and said, "No, it is to report one year from the date on which I set up the board of examination." Then the Minister of Transport announced the terms of reference and decided that there is not to be a report within one year of the setting up of the board of examination, but within one year of when he appoints the members to it. The date is going back progressively into 1974 and 1975. Can the minister be serious when he constantly changes the dates when the board is to report?

In this debate we are talking about a \$4.3 million item for the design and construction of this airport. The hon. member for Scarborough West referred to that amount as a piddling item. I have not heard comments like that since the days when C.D. Howe asked, "What's a million?". Notwithstanding the hon. member's remark, that amount of money represents an important symbol to the people of the metropolitan region and is an indication as to whether this government is really serious about reconsidering the Pickering airport decision. I think it is legitimate for them to ask, "Was this government serious in setting up an independent board of examination in the first place? Does it really intend to read carefully the evidence and pay heed to the recommendations of that board? If it does, why does it want this money in 1973-74 for construction and design?"

The government, by a devious procedural manoeuvre, may well prevent a vote tonight on the \$4.3 million item. I think the people of the country and the people of metropolitan Toronto will be only too aware of the government's motives in trying to head off that particular vote. But it will not save them or the NDP. Why does not the