

divorces can be set down until the fall. That indicates the need for additional judges in this country. It certainly gives emphasis to the old saying about justice delayed is justice denied.

There are many methods that can be considered to facilitate the disposition of trials in this country. I am still concerned about the fact that court house facilities are not used during two months of the year. I realize this is not the responsibility of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lang), but I am hopeful that he will urge upon his provincial counterparts consideration of the whole question of the use of facilities so we can get to the point where they are used year round. Holidays can be staggered. There would not be any problem for lawyers or judges.

I realize appointments are made upon recommendation from the provincial attorneys-general, but four new county court judges are being appointed in the province of British Columbia. Some time ago there was a move to abolish the county court in my province and have only a superior trial jurisdiction, a supreme court. That seemed to be eminently sensible.

When one examines the jurisdiction of a county court in British Columbia, he will find that it has a monetary jurisdiction of \$3,000 on the civil side. However, on the criminal side, it is given the right to sentence a person to life imprisonment. I submit that is a very poor allocation of responsibility. Surely one court of trial jurisdiction, with one court dealing with small debts claims, would more expeditiously serve the public's legal business. I also wish to comment on speeding up the process of file procedure. The provincial law reform commissions are all presently studying ways to improve procedure. I know the minister is interested in seeing that process sped along, because that would be another way to make improvements.

The mystical process of judicial appointments continues. I am hopeful that appointments will be made on a non-partisan basis. I hope that members, regardless of their political affiliation, are all being considered for appointment to the bench. I take some satisfaction from the fact there have been a few appointments from the New Democratic Party. I think there have been too few, but nevertheless, it seems to be a step in the right direction. It is an indication that the government is being a little more broad-minded on the subject than in the past.

I want to close with a comment made by the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Douglas) this morning. He said the significant thing about this bill is at least the number of judges that will be appointed will reduce the number of judges in the country. As a lawyer, I say that facetiously. In any event, we hope the passage of this bill will be expedited.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. Members: Question.

Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs.

Aeronautics Act

● (1730)

[*Translation*]

AERONAUTICS ACT

PROVISIONS OF SECURITY MEASURES AT AIRPORTS

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport) moved that Bill C-128, to amend the Aeronautics Act, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications.

He said: Mr. Speaker, for the last few years, practices which are not only wrong but even criminal have developed especially in airports. What used to be a dangerous means of transportation in itself, because travelling in the air always involves the possibility of an accident, has become even more dangerous.

Today we know that certain groups or individuals use this means of transportation for illegal purposes, or in an attempt to get things that they cannot obtain otherwise. In other words, some groups, perhaps less in Canada than in Europe—but it will probably come to that in our country as well—resort to threats against passengers or aircraft crews in order to obtain either money or the discharge of prisoners, or for political purposes.

Highjackers usually threaten either the stewardess or the pilots and if they do not get what they are asking for, they of course threaten to blow up the aircraft or force it to make for another airport than that of destination. For a few years, these tactics have developed to such an extent that they represent a real danger.

A few months ago, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity of meeting not only the presidents of the big Canadian airline companies but with those of regional companies to see what could be done before Bill C-128, which is now before us, may be amended, so that we have authority to act in this area.

Now, Mr. Speaker, under the law, the only power that exists is that of the air carriers, the airlines, to refuse access to their planes to a passenger who has a ticket if this passenger will not agree to a certain check. The federal government, the RCMP, or any other agency that we could empower does not have the power to search people and their luggage, nor to prevent them from boarding a plane. The airlines alone, under a contract that appears on the reverse of the ticket—a contract written in print so small that hardly ½ per cent of Canadians manage to decipher it—reserve themselves the right to refuse a passenger, without conditions.

It is under that power of the companies, Mr. Speaker, that we can now search passengers. In Canada, at all major airports, as you know, there are security agents searching people and luggage to prevent anybody from coming aboard a plane with offensive weapons, whether it be firearms, knives or explosives.

Of course, that method is of rather limited efficiency and we would like to be in a position to systematize the searching of passengers by granting the strict right of searching people and luggage when there are reasonable grounds to believe that someone might be trying to come aboard and threaten to divert the plane or even threaten the lives of people aboard.