

Vancouver International Airport

spending a great deal of money in connection with its upkeep; but I went through the last parliament and so far during this parliament trying to get an agreement among the federal government, the city of Vancouver and the Vancouver airport so the federal government might own this great international airport. Some three years ago we were within some \$50,000 of coming to an agreement. The aldermen, three in number, headed by the mayor, came down here; and had it not been for an accident which occurred on a particular day, I believe that gap of \$50,000 would have been closed and that we, the federal government, today would be in complete possession of the Vancouver international airport.

However, that has not as yet been done. I think that is possibly one of the restraining thoughts in the mind of the minister, if he has any restraining thoughts along that line, although I do not think he has. I refer to the fact that at the present time we are not the possessors and owners of the international airport.

That does not mean we should not take a vital interest in it. My interest is that of the people of greater Vancouver and of British Columbia generally. Vancouver airport has been described here tonight as the greatest airport in the dominion. I think the likelihood is that it is the greatest airport in the commonwealth. The passenger services operating from it and to it, together with the haulage of freight and what have you, make it a terrifically important economic item in the whole air transport system of the Dominion of Canada.

I should be extremely happy, Mr. Speaker, if the Minister of Transport would take this matter under serious consideration. I have sufficient confidence in his judgment to believe that he will go into the matter very fully and that, having done so, he will find some ingenious method whereby we may be able to have the additional facilities that are now jeopardizing the T.C.A. in that area housed or based at a location not too remote from the great metropolitan centre of Vancouver city. If that is done I am quite sure that not only the press but the people of all political thoughts in British Columbia will be more than happy.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, may I say I would hope that might be the outcome of consideration by the minister. If he would do that, I am quite sure that all the representatives from that area in this House of Commons, regardless of the party to which they belong, would be more than pleased

[Mr. MacDougall.]

and would look to the future with confidence in the matter of safety at the greatest airport we have in the land.

Hon. R. O. Campney (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I should like to say a few words on behalf of the Royal Canadian Air Force, which seems to have been the butt of considerable comment tonight. In the first place, the Royal Canadian Air Force does not operate training facilities in the sense of training pilots at Vancouver. There is no elementary or intermediate flying school or anything of that sort at Vancouver airport. We use the airport more or less as an operational base. There are two auxiliary fighter squadrons based on Vancouver, one equipped at the present time with Vampires and one with Mustangs, and I would doubt very much that the people of Vancouver would want them moved somewhere else. These squadrons have to fly during the week ends, as the pilots are engaged in civilian activities during the week, and they do fly from that airport. But the pilots are experienced, many of them veterans of world war II, and I do not think they should be classed as pilots in training.

Then we have a search and rescue unit at Vancouver airport which operates up and down the coast. It is equipped with quite a few planes, a number of them being seaplanes, and I doubt whether they could be better based than on Vancouver. Our operations are located at the far side of the airport away from the civilian activities and are not relatively very extensive, but I do think they are and could be very useful to the city of Vancouver.

The hon. member for Vancouver East (Mr. Winch) raised a question about paratroopers. That is new to me. I have never known the R.C.A.F. to conduct any paratroop training at Vancouver airport. Probably it was a demonstration put on for some purpose, but I cannot say unequivocally that it was or was not because I had not heard of it.

All I want to say is that I think the Vancouver airport is a very great airport, a very busy airport and a very well run airport. The speaker who preceded me pointed out that while it is called an international airport, it is in fact a municipal airport in respect of actual operation. That does not detract of course from the control exercised by the Department of Transport. I have been trying in my humble way for the last five or six years to have the airport acquired by the federal government. I thought I had arrived at that point after I had persuaded the former minister of transport to make an