

Oral Questions

I point out to my hon. friend that Air Canada, prior to the announcement on the second designation levels for Canadian carriers, had already announced that it was going to employ nearly 1,000 Canadians in its operations as pilots, as flight attendants and as ground personnel.

The growth and future of Air Canada and Canadian Airlines International will be the result of a series of initiatives undertaken by the government after a great deal of work.

In response to the question of the hon. Leader of the Opposition, I believe the attitude exhibited by Hollis Harris and Kevin Jenkins ushers in a new era of confidence for the employees of Canadian Airlines International, of Air Canada, as well as the shareholders of both companies and the Canadian travelling public.

* * *

[Translation]

PEARSON AIRPORT

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. The *Financial Post* reported last week that the Prime Minister's former employer, the law firm of Lang Michener, confirmed that a one and a half hour meeting had taken place in January 1990 between the Prime Minister and the Matthews Group, the main partner in the consortium that eventually secured the Pearson Airport privatization contract.

In view of the fact that Mr. Matthews said he met the Prime Minister to discuss the privatization of Pearson International Airport, contrary to what the Prime Minister stated in this House on December 8, does the Prime Minister still maintain that the subject of privatization never came up during that meeting?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is clear: the answer is no. I even took the time to check with the lawyer who represented the Matthews Group in the office. I spoke with him and he confirmed that the Toronto airport was not discussed at all. At that time, I was not aware of the privatization plan.

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, again according to the *Financial Post*, Mr. Matthews's recollection is that the Prime Minister, who was then running for the leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada, asked for \$25,000 in support for his campaign.

Considering how serious the allegations made in the *Financial Post* are, and to dispel any doubt regarding his personal involvement in this matter, does the Prime Minister not think that he should commission a public inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the privatization of Pearson Airport?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, I never solicited funds and Mr. Matthews himself says he did not contribute a penny to the Jean Chrétien leadership campaign.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, when the Minister of National Defence announced his long awaited public inquiry into the Somalia affair he promised it would get to the bottom of all questions surrounding DND headquarters and the military hierarchy.

Former deputy defence minister Bob Fowler is at the centre of the allegations. Yet we learned that Anne-Marie Doyle, one of the three commissioners appointed to look into the Somalia incident, is a close personal friend of Mr. Fowler.

How does the Minister of National Defence plan to deal with the perception that the impartiality of the inquiry has been compromised?

• (1425)

Hon. David M. Collette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the three commissioners were appointed because of their knowledge of the government process and public accountability, and their breadth of experience and impartiality.

If any one of these principles is compromised in any way then the matter will be addressed.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Reform Party is not questioning the abilities or the integrity of Anne-Marie Doyle. We are questioning the ability of the minister's staff. Surely the minister should have known about Ms. Doyle's 27-year friendship with Mr. Fowler.

This is not the first time the minister's office has dropped the ball. Last month it was the third airborne video. Last week it was the investigation of the military police. This is getting rather ridiculous.

I have a supplementary question. Who nominated the commissioners and why was the minister unaware of Ms. Doyle's 27-year connection to Bob Fowler?

Hon. David M. Collette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the inquiry was called under part I of the Inquiries Act. Therefore it is a government inquiry and a number of government departments were involved.

As to the specifics of what the hon. member is saying in his supplementary question, I think I addressed them in my answer to the first question.