

Committee on Railways and Shipping

have an opportunity to debate the matter fully when that legislation is under consideration.

On the subject of pensions, to which a number of hon. members have referred, I think I can only say that the subject was covered very fully last year by my predecessor, Hon. Lionel Chevrier; and after reading with a good deal of care what he said, as it appears at page 3125 and following of *Hansard* for last year, I do not believe I can say it either more eloquently or more clearly than he did. I have also had the opportunity to read the remarks on the same subject by Hon. Douglas Abbott, who was my predecessor in the House of Commons for the constituency of St. Antoine-Westmount, and who held the portfolio of finance. His remarks are to be found at page 2576 of *Hansard* for last year. Consequently I do not believe I would be doing more than taking up the time of the house if I were to reiterate the views these two gentlemen expressed so clearly last year.

I should like also to touch on the question of the inquiry into the accident which befell the Super-Constellation aircraft at Brampton late last year. It was my original intention to hold both a technical and a public inquiry into the causes of this accident. However, after I had had the opportunity of reading the evidence and the report of the technical board, and after the officials of my department had given extended and careful study to the evidence and the report—which may I say in passing was tabled in the house, made public and available to the newspapers—it seemed to me that a public inquiry could have no result other than to duplicate what had already been done by the technical board.

Before the inquiry of the technical board was initiated it did seem to me there might be some very real doubt as to what was the cause of the accident. I think it is a fair statement to make, after reading the evidence and the findings of the commissioners, that there could really be no doubt as to the cause of the accident. I thought possibly, too, originally, there was some possibility that officials or employees of the Department of Transport had been at fault. I would like to assure the house that had the technical board ascertained any facts which showed fault on their part, even though it might have seemed to be a duplication of effort I would have felt that a public inquiry should be held, so the public would be fully aware of the fact and could see to what extent my department was at fault.

However, after reading the evidence most carefully I came to the conclusion, just as the commissioners did, that my department

[Mr. Marler.]

had not been at fault. Consequently that was another reason which seemed to me to justify more than adequately the decision I came to afterward, namely not to hold a public inquiry. It also seemed to me—and perhaps I might be accused of being too sympathetic to the pilot—that a public re-examination of all the facts brought out before the technical board might easily be regarded as a persecution of the pilot, rather than an attempt to throw new light on the subject. I would tell hon. members that the case of the pilot is under consideration by my department, and I assure them that his case will be studied sympathetically, and that the treatment he will receive will be just and fair.

I think the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and I would reach different conclusions on the evidence. I do not think perhaps there is any difference in sympathy between us, so far as the pilot is concerned. But I must say that, having read the evidence, I do not reach the same conclusions he does; and I do not think the conclusions to be drawn from the evidence are other than those to which the board came itself. I should like to remind the house that the board consisted of three aeronautical specialists: D. W. Saunders of Toronto, who is district superintendent of air regulations of the Department of Transport, a former pilot and one of Canada's first flying instructors, who acted as chairman in this instance; Dr. J. J. Green, M.B.E., of the defence research board, who is also an experienced aeronautical engineer and who until recently was scientific adviser to the chief of staff for air; and Group Captain Leigh, a member of the R.C.A.F., who was head of the R.C.A.F. auxiliary group in Toronto. I think the quality of the three men whose names I have just mentioned is a guarantee both of the independence of the board itself and of the impartiality with which the inquiry was conducted.

Mr. Knowles: Would the minister permit a question? In view of his expressed sympathy for the position of the pilot, would he care to comment on the fact that at the hearings the pilot had no counsel? There was no one representing him or advising him in any way. Would the minister care to comment, particularly in the light of some of the questions put to the pilot?

Mr. Marler: I do not think I should comment on that at the moment. I think really it comes back to the evidence given before the board. I think I should say quite candidly to my hon. friend that I do not entirely share his view with regard to the questions. He read some to the house this afternoon and I did not detect any unfairness in the