

what I may call the series of inconsistent statements coming from the government side of the House, can the minister assure us that beginning tonight he will personally make every effort, which will be supported by members on my side of the House, to maintain constant communication with the parties in this matter so that they will not feel, as they put it to us on this side of the House, that there has been a talking to them but not talking with them.

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, first I wish the hon. member would not accept the press versions of inconsistent statements. The only thing which has been inconsistent is the way in which these statements have been reported in the press. As hon. members on all sides of the House know, this can happen from time to time. The principal persons involved in the current dispute have been the air traffic controllers. My officials have been in constant contact with them. It was well known that I was available at any time to meet with them as well, if it seemed that such meeting would be helpful or useful.

I happen to have a great deal of confidence in the officials who are involved in these discussions and did not see any particular need to intervene every day or on an hourly basis. I had not been requested by the controllers to meet them personally or directly, at least not until the message reached my office today at about 1.30, and I had not had such a request from the pilots. Actually, I received the request today by way of a report to me by a reporter who said that an indication of interest in the meeting had been shown. I responded immediately by extending the invitation to meet me. But I was always available to meet in that way.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, I wish to raise some rather obviously inconsistent statements which have been made by the government. In the order in council of May 13, three tasks were to be given to the commission. They were to inquire into and report on implications relating to aviation safety, on implications regarding costs, and on the operational efficiency of procedures. Those three considerations were included. However, for some reason, in the order in council tabled today one of those three items has been left out. Why, in the order in council tabled today, is the commission not given authority to inquire into the cost factor? For some reason that item has been left out of today's order in council, but was included in the order in council of May 13. Why has it been left out?

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, the reason, essentially, is that while operational efficiency is seen as relating directly to aviation safety, we wanted to leave the major impression that safety is the key consideration here. It is included under paragraph E in relation to relevant matters on which the commission may comment. It might not want to pursue to the ultimate limit the question of total additional costs; therefore it seemed better not to highlight that matter as an obligation for the commission.

On the matter of additional costs and whether additional procedures should be instituted, a decision would have to be taken by the government, which accepts its responsibilities in this House and the country for the cost of bilingualism. On the other hand, it is just as clear that although ultimate responsibility rests with the government, on questions involving safety it would, clearly, be practically

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and politically impossible for the government to take any step which would lower or jeopardize safety. In that area, the commission is playing the key role.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, it was a serious mistake to leave out the matter of operational costs, because those committed to implementing bilingualism as much as possible, where appropriate, should know the costs involved. Leaving out that matter was a serious omission. My last question to the minister is this: Is it the government's view that if the commission looks at the areas to which it is now restricted it can bring in a recommendation not to proceed with any extension of bilingual operations in air traffic control?

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, the commission is not limited in its recommendations and therefore that kind of recommendation is essentially open to it. It would be making a judgment on the quality of safety and operational efficiency and would draw conclusions therefrom.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. It seems appropriate, in the circumstances, to conclude our questioning by recognizing the hon. member for Moncton, the hon. member for Winnipeg North, the hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich, the hon. member for Vegreville, and the hon. member for Crowfoot.

Mr. Jones: Mr. Speaker, there should be no doubt that I, as a member of this parliament, am not committed to the present system for the implementation of bilingualism, particularly where air safety is concerned. Frankly, I have doubts about the sincerity of the Ministry of Transport in this whole matter.

An hon. Member: Come off it.

Mr. Jones: Let me speak. The airline pilots held a symposium on air safety this spring in this city. I should like to know why Ministry of Transport staff did not participate in that symposium. I believe the airline pilots made an effort to deal with the matter of air safety.

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the hon. member will see this in a different light when he knows that the date chosen for the meeting was chosen without consulting us, and the organizers of the symposium should have known that my key officials who are involved in air safety were on that date obligated to attend another meeting.

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, since it is important to create an atmosphere of good will, trust and confidence as a positive step toward resolving this dispute, can the minister advise if the government will reconsider its somewhat hasty decision to prosecute the Winnipeg controllers, since the threatened prosecution has not been conducive to the achievement of an atmosphere of good will and confidence? Is the government reconsidering its position in view of the appointment of the commission of inquiry?

Mr. Lang: No, Mr. Speaker. It has been the plain and straight-forward position of this government that laws must be upheld and those who offend the law must be proceeded against. I hope that hon. members opposite will in this instance, as they have in other instances involving broad and important principles, support us.