

Oral Questions

● (1440)

AIR TRANSPORT**INQUIRY AS TO DIRECTIVE TO MINISTERS AND DEPUTY MINISTERS TO USE COMMERCIAL AIRLINES IN ORDER TO SAVE FUEL**

Mr. A. D. Hales (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport. In the interest of saving aviation fuel, has the minister, his department or any other agency of government issued a directive asking ministers and deputy ministers to use commercial airline services rather than government planes?

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport): Yes, Mr. Speaker. All ministers were required to use Department of Transport aircraft only when necessary.

USE OF GOVERNMENT PLANE BY PRIME MINISTER FOR TRIP TO VANCOUVER

Mr. A. D. Hales (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I wish to address my supplementary to the right hon. Prime Minister. By what authority was the government Jetstar plane used last weekend to fly to and from Vancouver, consuming 6,000 gallons of gasoline? Why was it used rather than other services?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I established the practice five years ago, and I intend to continue applying it unless the House decides to censure me, of using government aircraft for my travels within this country and, when possible, abroad in order to ensure that the inconvenience which would be caused to public users, if I were to use public transportation, would be avoided. There are many other reasons for doing this, Mr. Speaker, but I want to underline the one which is of particular importance to the public. When I have occasionally used public carriers it has happened that the carrier was delayed, sometimes for many hours, because when it is known that I am going to make a flight it does happen that there are bomb scares and it is necessary to keep the aircraft on the ground for a matter of hours. It has also happened that certain citizens have complained and have even asked the government to pay them damages for the time they have been caused to wait because of the fact I was to fly on that aircraft.

Mr. Hales: I thank the right hon. member for his explanation, but it is reported the aircraft was used so the Prime Minister could attend a Liberal rally in Vancouver. Will the cost of the use of this plane be charged to the consolidated revenue fund or will the cost be paid out of the Prime Minister's own travelling expenses?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, as a matter of putting the record straight I would want to indicate that I not only attended a fund raising dinner, which was extremely successful and which caused a lot of funds to be raised for the Liberal party—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

[Mr. Trudeau.]

Mr. Trudeau: —but I also attended a public function, which had nothing to do with the party, at the city hall in Vancouver having to do with the Jericho Beach transaction and also having to do with the trip of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: —to China as a result of my very successful trip to China.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: Finally, I attended another public function in Chilliwack the next day, namely, a Santa Claus parade, which was important to the community of Chilliwack. If it had the by-product of helping our friend, Jerry Pringle, I am happy about that too.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Hon. members will have noted that the question period will expire in about two minutes. It has not been a very productive question period.

Mr. Tom Bell (Saint John-Lancaster): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Prime Minister about the criteria he has laid down regarding the use of planes and so on for the office that he holds. Will the Prime Minister now say that in the present emergency he will be practicing conservation in the use of energy?

Mr. Trudeau: Yes, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of fact, before taking this trip to Vancouver I did suggest to my staff that we should go commercially. They verified that with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police who gave me a direct preference on their part that I not go commercially because it was well known that I was going to Vancouver. As I indicated a moment ago, the dinner had been widely publicized. When it is well known that I am travelling on a commercial aircraft, this is precisely the time when there are bomb scares, generally by crackpots because none has actually gone off under my feet.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Scarborough West.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. We are in Scarborough rather than Edmonton.