

Oral Questions

decided to change those terms of reference, and in particular, would the minister be prepared to re-issue the terms of reference using the wording which was agreed to by all concerned, the Ministry of Transport, the Treasury Board and the air traffic controllers, when they met in Newfoundland two weeks ago?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, first let me say that I believe there are only two changes of any significance of which I am aware. One is the potential for issuing interim reports, and the other is the removal of the specific reference to implementation costs in the body of the document, whereas it would, as I indicated in answer to questions earlier, be capable of comment by the commissioners under subparagraph (e) of the terms.

However, I should say that in my discussions on Wednesday evening with the representatives of the controllers I made it quite clear that in our view these were not significant changes in that everything was still before the commissioners and there was no great demand at that point for a change of the terms, but I certainly indicated that I was prepared to entertain discussions along those lines if in fact the controllers do indicate a preference for a somewhat different form.

REASON FOR ELIMINATION OF COST FROM TERMS OF REFERENCE OF COMMISSION ON BILINGUAL AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): I think the House would be interested in knowing why the reference to costs in particular was deleted from the terms of reference for the Sinclair-Chouinard inquiry, and it is obviously clear that a suggestion which creates a capacity to comment upon those matters is not at all the same as a requirement to comment on those matters. I should like to ask the minister to tell us now specifically why there was a deletion of the requirement to comment on the cost factor, and whether he would be prepared to give us an undertaking that such a requirement would be reinserted in the terms of reference?

● (1110)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, this matter is being discussed with the controllers. I should think that is the proper place for the discussion about the terms of reference to take place rather than across the floor of this House at the present time. I say that with full knowledge of the interests of hon. members in this matter.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lang: If hon. members opposite would wait for a moment perhaps they would get some information. What I have said to the hon. Leader of the Opposition when he asked for the reasoning is that, first of all, it was in order to emphasize that the key role of the commission is very much related to the safety and operational efficiency

[Mr. Clark.]

aspects of any proposal for air traffic control that it seemed appropriate not to throw another item into that particular section of the area; second, to give the commission some greater freedom about how much it did want to get into the cost question. I am prepared to say the real issue of what it will cost if further certain steps are taken is one upon which we will certainly be interested in having full information. I am prepared to undertake that we will make our estimates of costs available to members here, too, as we have them and before we take further steps. In any case, apart from the work of the commission we are prepared to make it quite clear what the costs are and, therefore, what it is what we are prepared to pay for the specific further implementation of bilingualism.

REASON FOR GOVERNMENT ADVERTISEMENT CONCERNING DISPUTE OVER BILINGUAL AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I think it is not at all presumptuous of me to suggest that the House of Commons itself is very much interested in this question of costs and that we would be more satisfied with a finding on the question of costs that came from the inquiry rather than simply from the minister himself. In light of that I would express the hope that the item might be reinserted in the terms of reference as a result of the interest of the House of Commons, bearing in mind that we, as well as the controllers and the minister, have an interest in this matter.

My supplementary question relates to the approach of the government toward the goal of trying to maintain an atmosphere of calm and avoid the inflammation of this dispute which has already become too seriously inflamed. In that light, I ask the minister why he felt it necessary to take the extraordinary step of issuing advertisements over his signature, paid for by the government of Canada, setting forth one side—the government's side, of this dispute—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: —and whether he would not agree that this kind of advertisement by the government of Canada will serve to inflame relations between the parties—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: —and if he would not agree specifically to desist from that kind of advertisement until there has been some resolution of this matter?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, in my view what is contained in the advertisement is an explanation of fact and of the truth. I thought it was not just our side but perhaps the hon. Leader of the Opposition's side as well.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!