

Canadian Aviation Safety Board

intention of the Government to push the Bill through committee, report stage, and final reading tomorrow. Let me say at the outset that I have no part in this and I totally disagree with this approach, and I will elaborate why.

One of the comments that Mr. Justice Dubin made as a result of his investigation concerned interference by the Ministry of Transport in the activities of the air safety investigation group. One of the primary thrusts of this Bill is to separate those two groups. Therefore, the public is in no way in jeopardy if we continue this process through to the fall and the investigation units are allowed to conduct their competent thorough investigations and report them in a fair and open manner. If that happens, serious accidents, which happen from time to time in aviation, can be investigated and the important points brought to light. But I would like to re-emphasize that the public would be in no further jeopardy if we maintain this same procedure until the fall. The Bill should go through second reading today, be referred to committee, and then all parties who presented material to the Dubin inquiry should have an opportunity to comment on this Bill.

It is not correct to say, Mr. Speaker, that the people who were so instrumental in bringing out critical information before the Dubin Commission have had a chance to peruse this Bill. I am speaking today without having had an opportunity of perusing the Bill in the way I would have liked, to compare it with Mr. Justice Dubin's recommendations, work through some of the details, and have a chance to think about them. Concerning the groups that have been contacted to appear in committee, some have attempted to put together a brief quickly, but certainly I suspect they have not had any greater opportunity to think about the Bill. I am pleased that someone managed to produce for me briefs from two organizations which will attempt to appear tonight. I have had telephone conversations with other organizations which have spent thousands of dollars and put in thousands of hours in an attempt to enhance air safety in Canada.

One group were approached and asked if they would like to appear, but the notice was too short for them to be able to prepare anything suitable for the committee, so they will not be attending the committee meeting. They have had no opportunity to examine the legislation in the kind of detail they feel is necessary. They have itemized two serious problems they want to have more time to look at before they come forward. Their final comment is that this is too serious a matter to stuff through in an afternoon.

My research assistant is in the lobby this afternoon trying to run through a group of organizations to get their response to the jamming through of this Bill.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, it was my understanding that this legislation would pass through second reading, and I would like to see that happen. We could then move to committee with an opportunity to talk about the Bill, and talk to the Minister about possible changes or further clarification of questions we have. Then we could use the summer to solicit input from organizations responsible for making the Dubin Commission the successful inquiry it was. We could give them a fair chance

to examine the Bill, something this whole country would benefit from because of their expertise. But unfortunately that is not being done. I think the Government is just being totally and completely irresponsible in doing this. It is more concerned about the House Leader's scorecard than aviation safety.

It might be interesting, Mr. Speaker, to examine this material in the context of the Government's proposal for changes to the Aeronautics Act. I appeal to the Minister to release the draft of those changes as soon as possible so that people can have a reasonable opportunity to comment on and look at this particular legislation in conjunction with those changes.

The Dubin Commission has to be one of the most successful Commissions ever undertaken in Canada. First, it was not this Government which appointed the Commission. It was in fact the Opposition when they were in Government. I think that had a nice touch to it in that it was slightly more open and comprehensive than it might otherwise have been. But that is only speculation. However, many people were very impressed with the product. It might be useful to consider having a variety of input into the appointment of such commissions in order to round out the various points of view.

Another interesting thing I found in going through the Commission's material is that many employee groups were involved. It was the unions, organized labour, and the Government's own employees who came forward with information. There were attempts by the Government to stop them from testifying before the Commission. But they made a very great contribution, and I would go so far as to say that had they not made that contribution we would not have had the report before us today.

There were senior officials within the air transport administration who attempted to rewrite accident reports or have accident investigators modify their reports. That was a major reason for the lack of confidence in the procedures; it was not the air accident investigators, it was the senior officials. On page 25 of the Commission's report there is reference to a memo to a regional controller which says, "You are to fully consider the possibility of embarrassment to the Minister and any other potential political implications which may result from suspensions". This is absolutely astounding.

Mr. Pepin: You have given it a special meaning.

Mr. Skelly: What I am suggesting, Mr. Speaker, is not to point the finger of criticism, because we have to recognize that there are changes being made. But given the fact that some of the soundest recommendations in Mr. Dubin's report came about because of the commitment of hundreds if not thousands of hours of time by the Government's own employees, perhaps there is some room in this legislation for a permanent advisory body made up of selected individuals representing employee groups. The Minister might consider that in order to facilitate their input.

Another thing to note, Mr. Speaker, is that probably some of the worst examples of labour relations in Government are