

*Adjournment Debate*

have to include expansion at the Vancouver airport. I refer the minister to that press release of Thursday, March 14, 1974.

Concerned about this last summer, on July 9, 1975, I had occasion to ask the former minister of transport, who is now the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Marchand), if this matter would be put in front of the standing committee, and on page 7392 of *Hansard* the following appears:

"Mr. Speaker, I am ready to table all the reports and have them referred to the Standing Committee on Transportation of this House for full discussion."

I asked the Minister of Transport on Friday if that commitment would be kept. I asked the Minister of the Environment today whether the commitment made by him as minister of transport would now be kept by the new Minister of Transport, and if my memory serves me correctly the Minister of the Environment said he would consult with his colleague who, I wish to point out, is in the House tonight. I am very appreciative of that, but there are three questions which arise: first, will the commitment of the former minister that these matters will be put in front of the House transport committee be kept, and second, will there be a public hearing, which is called for under the environmental process? I have no patience with the minister because in his press release of March 12 he said that there have been 200 mini hearings. That is such a flagrant disregard of the truth it might be almost deliberate. Those were not mini hearings; they were meetings of the people who were putting together the material. I think the minister should take note of that and give his press release writer a lecture on speaking truth.

The third question is, will the new short runway about which the minister has been talking, be subjected to the environmental impact assessment procedure which the government laid down and repeatedly assured us will be followed?

There was a commitment to put this matter before the standing committee of the House. As there has not been a follow-through on the matter one is prompted to ask, when is a commitment not a commitment? I would hate to say that the unsatisfactory but brutally accurate answer is this: it is not a commitment when the promise is made by a Liberal minister.

I invite the minister this evening to make sure that the commitment is kept. It cannot do any harm but may do a great deal of good. If it is not kept it will be a demonstration of cynicism at its worst, truth abused and a wretchedly irresponsible destruction of confidence in the solemn word of a minister of the Crown. The undertaking was not elicited in the confusing hurly-burly of informal talk on a press release, but was made in answer to a specific, plain question asked in the House of Commons.

With respect, I ask the minister to meet those three specific requests. I ask the minister to please keep the commitment made by the former minister of transport last July 9.

**Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to say that I am now operational, so to speak, on my side of the House, and will stay on this side.

When the hon. member asked his question I said that I would try to give him time to make up his mind and say whether or not he thinks there should be a runway in the particular location referred to in Vancouver. There is this difficulty in building airports: people want to fly, but they do not want an airport built anywhere near them. Eventually a problem is created, a problem which the opposition loves to bring to the fore. Hon. members opposite like to say that people will be inconvenienced by new airports and hope, no doubt, that people will blame the government for the inconvenience.

I wish the hon. member would make up his mind on where he stands. The hearings dealt with a broad range of facts to do with airport expansion in Vancouver and available alternatives. I do not think it is wrong to refer to mini-hearings—that is not a bad expression. Many interested people came before the committee. It was like a sort of parliament in which the views of the people of the Vancouver area were heard. In that sense we held mini-hearing after mini-hearing. Hundreds of these mini-hearings were held in the course of the Vancouver airport hearings.

I do not say to the hon. member that we will put this matter before the committee of the House. That decision will need to be taken at a time—I do not know when it will be—when I know exactly what we must look at, what the different considerations involved are, and what decisions will need to be made. I do not believe in crossing bridges ahead of time. I think this is a personal matter for the minister. It is up to him how he will discuss this matter in parliament and with the people concerned.

I believe my record is clear. I believe in consultation, but I often believe in going directly to the people involved. I do not believe in becoming involved in a petty political process in which members are unwilling to state their own views and to say if they favour an airport for their own city. Apparently some hon. members want hearings to go on and on. In the end people who want to fly will not have the use of airports from which they may fly.

Shortly after I assumed responsibility for my present portfolio I learned of the proposal for a shorter runway. There were certain concrete advantages favouring the shorter runway as against the longer runway. As the shorter runway avoided difficulties concerning the movement of earth beyond the dyke—difficulties to which the hon. member and his mysterious friends alluded—it seemed an attractive proposition.

As between the shorter runway and the longer runway, there may be differences with regard to noise. Somebody must determine if those differences are real or imaginary, and then decide how much more study needs to be done. Yet, sooner or later in the interest of saving money, we must put an end to study after study, an end to opposition to simple steps leading to progress in Vancouver. I think, Mr. Speaker, that in the end Vancouver will not thank the hon. member if he opposes additional airport capacity for Vancouver, capacity which we see may be needed in several years. But I do wish he would make up his mind and tell me clearly what his position is on that question.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.23 p.m.