

Bilingual Air Traffic Control

aircraft industry who are out of work and who all of us would like to see go back to their jobs.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilbert Rondeau (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, we are thankful to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) for the statement he made in the House today on the serious problem of the strike in air transport. We deplore that such a strike has happened. However we doubt that the commission will be able to proceed quickly enough to allow us to take the necessary procedures so that the problem will not drag on for days and weeks. We are now waiting for the commission's report and, during that time, the Canadian economy is unfortunately burdened with serious problems because air transport in Canada today has become very important, and we know it.

Mr. Speaker, some individuals make it a specialty to turn this problem into a racial issue under the guise of safety. In the last paragraph, the minister said in French, and I quote:

Experience in recent years has shown that while making for better comprehension bilingualism can increase the safety of operations.

I do not think the minister included this sentence in his statement without checking its meaning. Bilingualism can increase air safety. When we see individuals now making a pretext of safety for disrupting air transport, particularly in Quebec, I think that unfortunately they are using a false pretext to cover up a racial issue. We know very well that studies have been made and that in certain other countries more than one language are used even in communications and other areas, and that nowhere else as far as we know has there been a strike because of the hazards the language used in those other countries would have caused.

Mr. Speaker, I myself had the opportunity in recent days when several of my colleagues were caught in the middle of this air strike and remained grounded because air services were no longer working, I had the opportunity to meet a unilingual anglophone, a pilot who feels that this safety issue is a false problem in air transport. He does not believe a word of it. Yet he does not speak French and he is a pilot from western Canada who believes they are creating a problem from a false situation. We wish, therefore, that a solution can be reached by the federal government, which should make it possible for Canada to remain a bilingual country. As far as I know, we still are in Canada, we have two official languages and we should not allow some individuals, under false arguments or for other pretexts, to take steps which will result in one of the official languages of Canada not being recognized in a public service as important as Air Canada or air transport in general. We therefore support the means—not radical means, but means of understanding, we hope—to be taken by the federal government to have the French language respected in Quebec, because it is the official language of Quebecers and one of the country's official languages. We must have the French language respected and prove wrong those who take pleasure in repeating that under the cover of safety, we must use only the English language, and particularly in Quebec.

[English]

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a couple of questions to the minister in view of the state-

[Mr. Broadbent.]

ment he has made. The minister indicated he was meeting with the representatives of the air traffic controllers, the pilots' association and executives of the airlines. Could he tell the House if he has had an opportunity of reviewing the terms of reference, whether these have been approved as yet, or whether he intends to put them to these meetings when they take place?

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that after sitting down I received a note that my suggestion for a meeting has been accepted at least by Mr. Maley, Mr. Livingston and Mr. Taylor of Air Canada who happens to be in Ottawa. We will meet at eight o'clock this evening and I have no doubt that the terms of reference will be further considered by us at that time. A good deal of what is in the terms of reference already has been the subject of earlier discussions between at least my officials, Mr. Livingston and the air traffic controllers.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Mr. Speaker, I have a further question. Could the minister inform the House whether he is going to take the position that unless the parties themselves are satisfied that the terms of reference are sufficiently broad to satisfy their membership or particular companies, the commission will not proceed, or does he intend the commission to proceed notwithstanding the concurrence of the parties affected?

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, the terms of reference are very broad, starting out by specifying the safety aspect as the key to allowing, under one paragraph, the commission to report on relevant matters. There is a great deal of breadth. While I hope the terms will be acceptable as they stand, obviously I have to await the discussions to know whether that will be so.

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I could put a further question to the Minister of Transport, for purposes of clarification. Yesterday, as reported at page 14744 of *Hansard*, referring to the air traffic controllers the minister said:

● (1530)

Indeed, the latest word I have is that there is some lack of interest in the commission because they seem to be taking the position that the only thing they will be satisfied with is a move away from the position which we have taken.

Meaning, the position the government has taken. Could the minister be more precise and tell the House whether he has been advised directly, especially recently, by the air traffic controllers that they will not co-operate in the matter of the technical commission?

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, no, I would not put it that way. The reference I made yesterday was to the conversation between them and my officials. I hope we will have their co-operation. They had earlier indicated that they could co-operate on the simulation exercises even before the question of the commission arose. I had a discussion with Mr. Livingston about the announcement I was making today. I spoke to him last night, but had no positive indication then of the attitude he would take.

Mr. Fraser: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In view of the unfortunate situation which has resulted from