

Motions

According to this young man, he was put in charge of this machine. As he did not even know how to operate it they gave him a different job, that of checking passengers with a magic stick, a job for which he had no more training than with the x-ray machine.

Then we heard a young woman explain that she was supposed to x-ray all pieces of luggage and keep her eyes open to discover bombs, except that she did not know at all what a bomb looked like and what shape she was supposed to watch for on the screen. Mr. Speaker, I don't know any better. I have no idea what a bomb looks like or what shape I would have to watch for on the screen. But I do know that certain Canadian authorities could show these young people what a bomb looks like and how one goes about hiding these devices in luggage. But it has never been done, or at least not in this case. And these happen to be the people who are responsible for doing the checking. Why? Quite simply because the Government told the airline companies: Security is your business, you look after that. And of course they take the same approach: security being their business, they ask for tenders from private companies, and naturally the lowest bidder gets the contract because that is the way they have to operate.

That is how come young people find themselves responsible for the entire security check process. I think we have to wonder about all this. The equipment does the work, the equipment is dependable, it can be adjusted, it can spot what it is supposed to spot, but it would be nice if only the individual who operates the equipment knew what he or she is looking for, or how the equipment will identify whatever it is designed to find.

Mr. Speaker, the Government simply must take action as soon as possible, and if it were to accept all the recommendations the committee made in its report to the House, at the earliest opportunity the Minister ought to give priority to the recommendation concerning security, which reads as follows: That the Minister of Transport take full responsibility for checking passengers and hand luggage in major Canadian airports, and make sure that security checks are done by airport staff and/or by local or provincial police, or by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

• (1330)

[English]

Mr. Belsher: Mr. Speaker, I must compliment the Hon. Member for Westmorland—Kent (Mr. Robichaud) on his address. He was a member of the standing committee that travelled to Europe to study this very important issue.

I listened with interest to his concern about safety and security, which I share. I might add that the Minister responded to questions about airport security which were raised in the House in light of a program that was aired in the media. He said that he will watch the situation very closely and will act accordingly if he is not satisfied. I do not want anyone to think that the Minister is not conscious of airport security or that he has taken no action. That is not the case.

The Member wants the Government to react positively to all the recommendations that have been put forward in this report. The Government has already made some response, particularly with regard to Terminal 3 at Pearson International Airport. I remind the Hon. Member of the recommendation that in the planning and construction of the departure level of Terminal 3 at Pearson International Airport, the highest priority be given to check-in facilities and for the comfort and convenience of departing passengers.

He will know that the Government considers that the development of the third terminal at Pearson International Airport be a prime example of private sector and Government co-operation in developing this major airport facility. He will know that all the proposals have been carefully considered and a lease is in the final stages of preparation, with emphasis on ensuring a world class facility for Canadians.

He knows that the passenger areas in Terminal 3 will be larger than those in other terminal buildings. He will also know that state of the art flow-through counters will be installed in the domestic check-in area. The international area will have specialized facilities for high risk flights. Moving sidewalks will be provided throughout the terminal for passenger convenience.

The committee also asked that where existing and future demands warrant, to ensure the continuing economic viability and development of our major airports, we should include giving the highest priority to intermodal planning and facilities, more particularly with regard to frequent and rapid train or subway links. We saw a number of those in Europe. The Member knows that the design of Terminal 3 will include a right-of-way for an automated rapid transit link to the centre of the terminal building. Transport Canada recognizes that only a multi modal approach to transportation planning will ensure the most expedient traffic flow.

A third recommendation was for an immediate review of strategy and treatment of the facilities for in-transit passengers at our major international airports, with special attention given to this type of lucrative traffic in the planning and construction of Terminal 3 at Pearson International Airport. The Member knows that this is not the sole responsibility of Transport Canada. While Transport Canada strives to provide the best facilities, it must do so by observing stringent security regulations and other legislative constraints outside its mandate. This includes respect for the enforcement mandate of those who organize and are responsible for the inspection of the terminal passengers.

It has already recognized the importance of in-transit traffic to the airlines of Canada and its economic benefits to Canada. The department has been working with the airlines and the departments of Immigration and Customs in the past year in studying the implications of adopting a more European style of operation.

Does the Member not agree that the Government is already working very strenuously toward adopting the majority of