

Oral Questions

• (1455)

How can the minister allow the Quebec air transport industry and the place of the French language in Quebec airspace to be at the mercy of an organization that does not even have the decency to submit its instruments of incorporation in both official languages?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think that the success we have had in our negotiations with all those involved in the air navigation system in Canada is worth noting. The composition of NAVCANADA's board of directors was determined by stakeholders from every sector. The Canadian professional pilots' association, air traffic controllers and unions are represented on the board.

I think that the hon. member should mention the fact that, in our negotiations with NAVCANADA's officials, we have made sure that all NAVCANADA operations comply with the Official Languages Act, for instance, and that, except for federal government representatives, every board member is selected from the community responsible for managing this whole system.

It is unfortunate if the particular group the hon. member referred to is not represented, but that is certainly not the Government of Canada's fault.

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, does the minister not think that it is totally unacceptable for the Association des gens de l'air du Québec and the Association québécoise des transporteurs aériens not to be represented on NAVCANADA's board of directors, given the particular status of the French language in Quebec airspace?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all NAVCANADA stakeholders, including the air traffic controllers, who, as far as I know, are still members of the national association representing this group, are involved in the negotiations. Members of the Transportation Association of Canada are represented on the board.

There is no doubt that we recognize the importance of the French language in the air navigation system. That is why, during these negotiations, the Government of Canada insisted that the Official Languages Act be complied with.

I am convinced that, had the hon. member followed the negotiations and taken a genuine interest in the outcome of an unprecedented co-operative effort in the Canadian air transport industry, he would have realized that the French language and the needs of the people who use this language at work, not only in Quebec but across Canada, are well represented on NAVCANADA'S board of directors.

[English]

CANADA CUSTOMS

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, last year Mr. Callum Scott, a Canada Customs agent at the Ottawa airport, was reprimanded and subsequently left in employment limbo because he was wearing a poppy on his uniform on Remembrance Day.

The mismanagement by the minister and his department officials has cost Mr. Scott his job and his dignity over the course of this past year.

I ask the Minister of National Revenue and taxation, customs and excise how this could possibly have happened. What measures has he taken to ensure Mr. Scott receives a fair hearing from senior management, as he has been promised over the course of the year?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I assure the House that the wearing of a poppy is no ground for any concern with Revenue Canada. The rules are clear for senior managers. Wearing a poppy by people in uniform is perfectly acceptable.

If in Mr. Scott's case there was any suggestion or concern, it was against the policy of the department. I do not have any information as to whether it was a failure of policy in this instance.

Mr. Scott has a number of opportunities to proceed with various grievance procedures. Under the circumstances it would be inappropriate for me at this time to comment any further on this case.

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Scott has phoned the minister 37 times. This individual has used the procedures but has been stonewalled every time he turns around by the management of the minister's department. The poppy issue is over but what is at stake is that over the course of this year this gentleman has been put into forced unemployment.

• (1500)

The gentleman is suffering severe stress. The department has put this gentleman, who has received many commendations of good employment, under such duress and stress that he has had a medical certificate given to him. This is the kind of work this minister considers efficient and effective.

Why does he not return his phone calls? Why does he not give this gentleman what he promised and what his department has promised over the last six months?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the gentleman in question has had his communications returned. There are procedures in place for handling the complaint that he has. I believe it would be appropriate that this take place and I certainly will not comment on his medical condition.