

AIR SAFETY

ENFORCEMENT OF REGULATIONS RESPECTING AIRCRAFT AND PILOTS

Mr. Dan McKenzie (Winnipeg-Assiniboine): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. The Dubin inquiry into air safety is being told practically on a daily basis that safeguards and information which could prevent air accidents are being ignored. As this situation has existed for years, will the minister now call for the resignation of his aeronautics director, Mr. Walter McLeish, and give us some assurance that corrective measures are being taken now, and will he assure us that he will not wait until next October for his department to enforce safety standards in respect of aircraft and pilots?

● (1140)

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I will not accommodate my hon. friend. Measures have been taken over a period of time to improve the safety control capacity of the department: for example, regional offices have been created in order to be closer to the scene of accidents, and things of this kind.

I answered the question in a more general tone the other day when I said that, of course, testimony is given to the Dubin commission. The judge has the responsibility to filter the material received and to bring forward recommendations. I think we have to wait until he does so before implementing any recommendations which he might make.

Mr. McKenzie: A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. In view of the serious charges being made at the inquiry, will the minister consider asking Mr. Justice Dubin to give an interim report? A number of years ago a directive went out from the aeronautical licence inspection branch of the department, not to enforce safety regulations because that might embarrass the minister. Is this directive still in force, and will the minister call for an interim report from the judge?

Mr. Pepin: It is not, Madam Speaker. It has often been said by my predecessors that this directive, as the hon. member termed it, is not to be implemented. This has been made very clear.

On the subject of the Dubin inquiry, I should like to emphasize the fact that it is not only a question of the number of inspectors. There are things that have to be changed in the law itself, there are things that have to be changed in the penalties that exist in the law, and there are things that have to be changed in the implementation of that law in terms for example of the court not being severe enough. It is a multifaceted problem. That is why I think it is desirable to wait for the Dubin report before taking action.

Oral Questions

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

SALARIES PAID TO ORDER IN COUNCIL APPOINTEES

Hon. Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Secretary of State. In view of the impending freedom of information legislation, and the government's supposed commitment to the policy of openness initiated by the Leader of the Opposition when he was prime minister, could the minister tell the House why salaries of senior public officials appointed by order in council are now to be kept so unspecific as to amount to keeping the public in the dark as to how much the salaries are that are being paid?

An hon. Member: We know what you make, Allan.

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, if I may reply to the question presented by the hon. member, I would tell him that when it came to my attention that this information on salary ranges had not been included in the lists, I undertook to ensure that in future when these salary ranges have been established as the result of a current review they will be included as part of the information.

INCLUSION IN LEGISLATION OF PROVISIONS FOR INFORMATION ON SALARIES

Hon. Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Madam Speaker, I take that as an undertaking by the acting prime minister, although he has not indicated why they were excluded in the first place.

May I ask the Secretary of State to assure the House that the proposed freedom of information bill which he is about to present to the House, or will present very shortly, will be so drafted that the information which the acting prime minister has said will become available will, in fact, be available under that bill?

Hon. Francis Fox (Secretary of State and Minister of Communications): Madam Speaker, we are presently in the drafting stages of the information bill to which the hon. member refers. I believe that the hon. member will find, in that bill, that we are trying to be as open as possible and to make as much government information available to the public as is possible. In that sense, we have been to a great extent inspired by the bill introduced by the hon. member.

I hope he will await the tabling of the bill which, as I indicated before, I hope will be, at the very latest, in the last week of the sitting of this House. Anyway, I hope to table it before the House adjourns for the summer recess.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Madam Speaker, if we are that close to finality with respect to the drafting processes within cabinet—I asked the minister this question before, but he could not answer so precisely—could he tell the House today whether the bill contains provision for an independent judicial review of the decisions of ministers or others who withhold information?