

Oral Questions

● (1420)

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): I assure the minister that I do have special cases to tell him about but I do not intend to mention names in the House. My further question refers to foreign airlines services. Has the hon. gentleman or his officials had any conversation with foreign airlines to ascertain when their services will return to normal?

Mr. Lang: It was quite clear why certain foreign services were being suspended from Canadian operations and this happened only in certain cases. There were at all times a significant number of foreign services flying into Canada. I take it the reasons for the suspension of services by some airlines have now disappeared and I anticipate seeing an early resumption of those services, too.

FORM OF RECOMMENDATION TO PARLIAMENT FOLLOWING
REPORT OF COMMISSION ON SAFETY OF BILINGUAL AIR
TRAFFIC CONTROL

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): My question is also to the Minister of Transport, Mr. Speaker. Having had to change his mind on a number of crucial items in the past 48 hours, it is delightful to see the minister has regained his traditional modesty.

Some hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. Broadbent: Would the minister say whether in the order in council which we are to see later today it is clear as to the form of parliamentary agreement which will be necessary to implement recommendations from the Commission? More specifically, will the minister tell us what form the recommendation to parliament will take following the Commission's recommendations? Will it be a detailed recommendation submitted to parliament to be voted on, or will the vote be more on a question of principle as it applies to air traffic control?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): I am happy to note that the hon. member is finding it a little difficult to keep on talking about rigidity in the face of flexibility, but that will not take him too long to get over. I will not try to predict the exact form of the resolution because that will no doubt be decided at the time we receive the report of the commission. But the gist of what we are proposing is that at that time the Commission, in order for the report to be before us at all, has indicated that certain additional air traffic services in a bilingual way are fully consistent with safety in the Province of Quebec. This report will be put before the House in a way which will allow the House likewise to endorse the view that safety is indeed consistently satisfied by the changes in procedure and implementation which would follow from them.

I say most emphatically to the hon. member that this is not in any way a proposal that the House in any way question the bilingual policy or indeed the broad proposition that to the extent safety is not degraded or in any way jeopardized we shall propose to move forward with bilingual aircraft services in the Province of Quebec. That is a principle for which I believe this House stands firmly now and needs no further resolution. It will be only a question of the actual report and the adoption of certain implemen-

[Mr. Lang.]

tation measures as being consistent with safety. This is a further triple, quadruple assurance we are seeking to give to any who doubted that, indeed, safety did come first and that no steps will be taken to jeopardize safety. I will be glad to put that proposition before the House and before going forward, therefore, the majority of members of the House will also have to say that safety was not being jeopardized.

REINSTATEMENT OF COST IN TERMS OF REFERENCE OF
COMMISSION ON BILINGUAL AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I believe in the House on Friday, and certainly outside the House, the minister indicated that the government would be prepared to reinstate cost as one of the three principal elements of the investigation of the commission, in addition to the crucial element of safety and the element of efficiency. Would the minister tell the House whether cost has now been reinstated as one of the three principal areas of investigation for the commission?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Yes, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated in the House when we were last discussing this matter, while there had been no great interest in or question about this matter on the part of the controllers, I was prepared to reintroduce it into our discussions to see whether it would sit well with the controllers. I did do so and they were agreeable to it, and as a result the implementation cost is an item specifically mentioned in the document, as it had been in the draft we had worked on earlier.

POSSIBILITY OF FREE VOTE ON REPORT OF COMMISSION ON
BILINGUAL AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): A final supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, having to do with the important area of what has been described in the news media as the government's decision to have a free vote on this issue. May I ask the minister whether, once the commission makes its recommendation, it is the government's intention simply to bring a motion before the House that will not have the specific endorsement of the government but will be left to government backbenchers as a free vote on the issue—that is to say, it is not a matter of government policy—or is it the government's intention to bring forward a specific recommendation which it is prepared to support as a party in the House of Commons?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, so far as this part of the policy is concerned I can only think in terms of the government side, there having to be some decisions on the other side in order to have it work in full. The position as described by whatever words were used is that we really wanted a general attitude that would reflect sufficient consensus, and I was saying that even among opposition members there would be found to be some reasonable people who were willing to support the position of safety being met. That is the approach we are taking in this matter, though in the end, of course, it will be the majority in this parliament who will decide the issue as to whether the report shall be approved.