

Aeronautics Act

My colleague, the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain was talking about liability insurance and compensation for passengers as well as for the next of kin of those killed in aircraft accidents. I agree to some extent with his remarks but I do not think he went far enough. Whether an accident or mishap is due to negligence, or to what the legal profession calls an act of God, it seems to me that every aircraft passenger should be insured. This should be a form of no fault insurance. A very small percentage of passengers travelling by air take out aircraft insurance. I suppose we all did the first few times we flew but after that we quit bothering. The fees charged for \$50,000, \$100,000 or \$250,000 worth of insurance are relatively modest. It would seem to me that everyone travelling by air would be willing to pay a reasonable premium that would provide a standard and reasonable amount of compensation in the event of injury or death. I would estimate, and I stand to be corrected if I am very far out, that for somewhere between 50 cents and \$1 extra on each airline ticket every passenger could obtain between \$100,000 and \$250,000 worth of insurance in the event of injury or death due to an airline accident, no matter what the cause.

It seems to me that kind of coverage should be compulsory, particularly for people travelling by commercial aircraft. There should not be any fine print on the back of the ticket. Every person who flies via a commercial airline should know that when they purchase their ticket the extra 50 cents or \$1 paid is to cover \$100,000 or \$200,000 worth of insurance which will be paid by the insurance company to the injured party or to the next of kin in the event of accident. I suspect any insurance company or group of insurance companies, having that kind of business amounting to many millions of dollars a year, would be only too pleased to insure every passenger for \$100,000 or \$250,000 in the event of injury or death. Normal standard practice should automatically include insurance coverage in the purchase of an airline ticket.

As illustrated by my colleague the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain, litigation which goes through the courts six, eight, 10 years after the event should not be paid for by those who were injured or the next of kin of those killed. This litigation can cost tens of thousands of dollars. If the breadwinner dies due to an aircrash it can become necessary to borrow money to live. Surely as a matter of common decency a nominal charge on every airline ticket would cover the premium for a substantial insurance coverage for injury or death due to a mishap.

This is not socialist dogma, even though it might sound like that coming from me. It is a matter of treating one another decently. It is a matter of saying that there is something immoral about trying to make a profit from the misfortunes of others. It is something we should darn well do. In fact that is one regulation which, if the Minister of Transport brings it in tomorrow, I would agree with.

The amendment put forward by the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) is an excellent one. We will support it. We agree with it. However, I want to caution my friends to the right that they should not be under any illusion; whether

[Mr. Benjamin.]

there be a majority Liberal government or a majority Conservative government, if this kind of amendment were part of the law it would still be voted down by the majority. If 20 members signed a motion and there was a debate, a majority government would still vote it down. However, it is still a valuable item to have in the legislation. The deputy minister, the airlines experts in the Ministry of Transport, members of the Canadian Transport Commission or even those in consultation with the airline industry would be aware in the course of drawing regulations that unless they do an excellent job with these regulations there will be some kind of a row in parliament. Therefore, these people will be more careful and thorough when drafting regulations. No matter what party is in power, none is perfect. Rome was not built in a day. Of course, the NDP was not building Rome either. There might be the odd miracle situation where some backbenchers of whatever party which had a majority would rebel and vote for a motion signed by 20 members. Some of them might even sign it. But with that caution hanging over the heads of those drafting regulations and those who sit in cabinet and pass them by order in council, I submit they would be more careful and conscious of what those affected by legislation feel about it.

Even with this kind of provision, Mr. Speaker, whether it be a majority or a minority government the party in power still has the ultimate responsibility, as it must under a system of responsible government. Letting parliament decide by vote concerning a motion signed by 20 members is the name of the game in this system of parliamentary government. If the motion passed and the regulations were submitted to the appropriate committee of this House, this would be a good indication that the government of the day had made a severe error in what it had drafted.

● (2112)

There is no doubt that 90 per cent of such motions would not get passed. Some might pass in a minority parliament, but in a majority parliament it would be extremely rare for one to pass. If one did, it would indicate a revolt amongst not only opposition members, but members on the government side as well. That is the value of the amendment.

I am under no illusion, and neither are my friends to my right, that this will be a 100 per cent guarantee of safeguard regarding government regulations. However, it will at least serve as part of the checks and balances in a parliamentary system of government, regardless which party is in power. This amendment provides an avenue of appeal before, during or after the publication of regulations not only by those affected, whether it is zoning or any other regulation, but by any other interested groups that might think the regulation too strong or think it should not be there at all.

If we are going to have regulations on zoning, the methods of determining compensation for those affected are inadequate. In fact, as I understand the bill, compensation is provided only to those using land in a manner which does not conform to the new regulations. It does not provide compensation to anyone else who might be caused injury by airport