

Oral Questions

● (1420)

[English]

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, at this point in time there are obviously a number of infractions of our regulations. There was this recent incident of the use of the French language contrary to the rules. I understand that a few days ago there was an infraction in the refusal by an Anglophone to use French, although he is bilingual. In each case it is necessary for us to enforce the regulations as they stand. It is our objective to work in a quiet atmosphere of good sense and good will to allow for the use of the French language where reasonably possible, but we have to do so with the serious consideration of safety.

[Translation]

PROPOSED MODIFICATION OF BILINGUAL AIR-TO-GROUND COMMUNICATIONS REGULATIONS TO GIVE EQUALITY TO FRENCH

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask a supplementary question.

Considering the importance of the question just raised and the answer of the Minister of Transport, and considering the fact that at the last international conference of French-speaking parliamentarians the matter of the language used in air-ground communications was raised, and that the delegates committed themselves to promote in their respective Parliament the use of the French language, through motions or resolutions, my question is the following: Is the Minister of Transport prepared without reservation, to allow the use of French in Canada in the aeronautic field and to recommend that the regulations be amended in order that this language be used as much as English?

[English]

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, it would perhaps take a long statement to indicate to the hon. member the progress we have made and are making. I will send him that kind of long statement. We have had a number of studies and are having more. We have constant contact between our safety officials and the various people in all parts of the country involved in air traffic and air traffic control with the object of determining what procedures are necessary in order that further steps can be taken with regard to safety to allow the use of the French language and the English language in air travel and air communication.

[Translation]

SUSPENSION OF TWO COMMUNICATIONS EMPLOYEES IN QUEBEC FOR USING FRENCH

Mr. Pierre De Bané (Matane): Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask a last supplementary question.

The Minister of Transport talks about security, but considering that the two employees dismissed yesterday without pay were two French-speaking employees talking between themselves over the telephone, that it was not a ground-to-air conversation but a ground-to-ground telephone conversation, and that those civil servants were

[Mr. Beaudoin.]

dismissed without pay, how can the minister refuse to admit that this is not only a glaring injustice but also an abysmal absurdity as regards security?

[English]

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I will double-check the circumstances to determine whether a rule was offended. If so, then one understands that these rules in this very important area must be adhered to. It is only if we see that the rules can be changed that a different practice can be followed. If there was no infraction, no failure to abide by the rules, the matter would be on a different basis; I will look into that part of it.

POSSIBILITY MR. ARPIN WILL SUCCEED MR. McLEISH AS DIRECTOR GENERAL

Mr. Jack Murta (Lisgar): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Transport. Will he inform the House whether Mr. Peter Arpin, the Quebec administrator of aviation, will be succeeding Mr. McLeish as director general of aviation for that particular segment of his department?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I will double-check on any future possibility. At the moment, I know of no such change.

EFFECT ON SAFETY OF BILINGUAL AIR-TO-GROUND COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Jack Murta (Lisgar): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question about this very important matter of language rights and air-ground communication. Are the minister and his department convinced that the use of two official languages in air-ground communication will be beneficial to airline safety?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the question really is what procedures are required in order to ensure that safety can be preserved. We believe that the safety elements have been satisfied in the steps we have taken so far, which was to allow the French language in air to control tower communications in the five specific airports for visual flights. Indeed, we have adopted some new procedures to further ensure safety. I am satisfied with that. We are looking at the question and have general agreement on all sides that advisory communication should be available in both languages throughout the province of Quebec. The more delicate questions of instrument flight and extending French language use to visual flight at other airports are the subject of ongoing discussions between our safety people and the persons using the service who will be primarily affected.

An hon. Member: You will get somebody killed, eventually.