

Oral Questions

registered in media comment and questions and answers in this House. One thing that is sometimes overlooked but which is absolutely clear is that the Government has the power to prohibit that kind of shipment through Canadian airspace, including the Canadian North.

Mr. Orlikow: Are you going to exercise that power?

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): The question of whether we will choose to exercise that power, to come to a question from a member of the NDP, will be dealt with when it is no longer hypothetical.

The request made to me, as I understand it, by the Hon. Member for Davenport is that we send a signal now to the Government of Japan and the Government of the U.S. We are in contact with both those Governments.

REQUEST FOR ASSURANCE PERMISSION WILL BE REFUSED

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, why can the Minister not give us the assurance today that the Government of Canada will give the signal he has referred to in advance of the signing of this agreement? In that way neither Japan nor the U.S. will entertain any notion that they will be able to get permission from Canada to fly this plutonium through our airspace? Why not give us this assurance now?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I want to make two points in response. The first is to reiterate that the Government of Canada has that clear power and there should be no doubt and no fear about that. The second is that we are at this stage in contact with both the U.S. and Japanese Governments and it is my judgment that is the most effective way to proceed in these circumstances at this time.

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AIR SAFETY

CANADIAN AVIATION SAFETY BOARD REPORT

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister in the absence of the Minister of Transport. He will be aware that the Canadian Aviation Safety Board produced a report yesterday which said in part that the number of aircraft/aircraft and aircraft/vehicle conflicts reported in Canada is at a level significant enough to warrant serious safety concerns. The report makes a large number of recommendations. Will the Minister ensure that rather than studying these recommendations the Government will immediately begin the process of implementing them so we can increase the level of safety at Canadian airports?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I know the Hon. Member has acknowledged and recognized that as a Government we have always treated safety as a priority in all matters relating to transportation. The Canadian Aviation Safety Board, with respect to its responsibility for investigating accidents, has had a very successful track record. More importantly it has been successful in identifying ways and means of improving air safety in all its aspects. One of its objectives was to make recommendations from time to time to the Government concerning ways and means of improving the system. This is a classic and clear-cut example of that work which is being carried on very effectively.

I know the Minister of Transport will take the recommendations seriously. Having had some experience in working with the Department, I know they will be very eager to implement recommendations to improve safety at our airports, particularly on the ground.

Mr. Angus: The Minister will also be aware that the Department has not always accepted the recommendations of the CASB.

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION ACT

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, the Minister will know that as a result of Bill C-18, the National Transportation Act, there will be an increase, at some airports, in the number of flights. There will be an increase in the number of less experienced personnel involved. Because of what this report says will he undertake to delay the implementation of C-18 until such time as these recommendations have been fully implemented? Only then will we move to the next stage of the change in the transportation sector. Is he prepared to make that commitment?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, not having had the benefit of reading the report and studying the recommendations I think it would be irresponsible for me to accede to the Hon. Member's request. Suffice it to say there are suggested improvements in systems and co-ordination of the air navigational systems at the various airports. The Hon. Member is assuming there will be a lot more traffic involving inexperienced—

Mr. Angus: Less experienced.

Mr. Mazankowski:—less experienced personnel at the controls. I am not sure whether that is a valid observation. I would not want to associate myself with that because I am not sure it is referred to in the report.

I can only repeat that I know the Minister of Transport and his Department will take these recommendations very seriously.