

Aeronautics Act

The parliamentary secretary said, and I quote:

At the outset I wish to thank the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forrestall) for his patience and co-operation with us in dealing with this bill concerning the creation of an organization for impartial investigation of transport accidents. He must be setting a parliamentary record of sorts as this is, I believe, the sixth time the bill has been considered at private members' hour. However, unlike many other bills that are presented, the objective of this bill does command broad support from all parties, and we wish it to receive further consideration.

I emphasize that because the government is now on record as supporting in principle the substance of the bill which the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East submitted to this House, as the parliamentary secretary pointed out, six times.

We have before us Bill C-40 which, as the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) said, is a multifaceted bill. There was no reason why the substance of the private bill to which we have been referring could not have formed part of this bill. There is no excuse in the world, especially now that the government has indicated it supports the substance of that bill in principle.

I do not have to tell anyone in this House how often the media and the public laugh at the whole situation of the private members' hour. However, when a private member, no matter from which side of the House, brings in a bill six times, and the substance of it meets with the approval of the government, it seems incredible, when there is an opportunity to put the substance of that bill into a bill put in front of the entire Chamber, that it is ignored. No doubt somebody from the government will say it is still being considered. The question is whether it is being considered sincerely, whether the government's words that it supports it in principle are sincere. I notice the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) is indicating by nodding his head that they are considering it sincerely.

● (1240)

Mr. Lang: Would the hon. member permit a question? I appreciate his reference to the investigation review board and to the government's commitment to it. I wonder if he recalls, first of all, the announcement of the interim board, which was clearly a step pending the development of the legislation to provide for an over-all, independent investigation review board. In his reference to the possibility of including a provision here, would he not agree that it is desirable to broaden the scope of the application to cover aspects other than air and that this would be a good reason to come forward—an early date, I agree—with a bill rather than an amendment to the *Aeronautics Act*?

Mr. Fraser: I thank the minister for his intervention. It might well be that what he suggests is appropriate. I am just reminding him and members of the government that this has now been under consideration since 1971—there are many references to it in the record. If the minister's remarks are to be taken as an indication of his own concern, and the concern of the government, I welcome them and thank him for his intervention. But so that neither he nor any other member of the government may forget when this debate is over the assurances which have been given, let me remind them they

[Mr. Fraser.]

are on record as supporting the principle of the bill put forward by my hon. friend from Dartmouth-Halifax East.

Let me recall that in the Speech from the Throne of September 30, 1974, reference was made to the intention to establish an independent accident investigation board. Then, in May, 1975, the minister of transport of that day assured the House that his department was "exercising pressure on the government House leader to bring in legislation as soon as possible". In October of 1975 the present Minister of Transport said in response to a question in the House that work on the legislation was "going forward". Later, on December 2, 1976, the matter was raised again at a meeting of the standing committee when questions were directed to the deputy minister, who said that the matter of an independent accident investigation board was still under consideration in the department. He added that a memorandum to the cabinet should be ready in six to eight weeks, in other words, by the end of January, 1977.

I take it from what the Minister of Transport has just said that the government is finally taking this matter seriously. It is my plea to the minister, and to all hon. members, to maintain reasonable pressure on the government to bring forward this legislation, or take immediate steps to consult with members on this side and, perhaps, with members on the government side who support the principle, with a view to bringing about any necessary fine point adjustments in the private bill standing in the name of the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East. That bill could then be sent to committee, and brought back to the House for passage.

It has been a privilege to take part in this debate. This in an issue in connection with which the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East has worked diligently and with great concern over a number of years. It would appear from the minister's remarks that this long and diligent service in a necessary cause may at last come to fruition, and I am sure hon. members generally will join with me in applauding the efforts of my hon. friend in this regard.

Mr. William Knowles (Norfolk-Haldimand): Mr. Speaker, I rise to take part in this debate in order to supplement representations I have made to the minister by way of correspondence in relation to the topic I have in mind—I refer to the Mount Hope airport which serves the area I represent.

Bill C-40 gives me an opportunity to do this because it would provide the minister with extended authority in connection with planning development around airports and certain of the facilities required in connection with the expansion of airports. Almost a year ago the minister appointed an ad hoc committee, composed of representatives of various municipalities surrounding Mount Hope, to consider whether a new site should be allocated to serve Hamilton and my area, or whether the facilities at Mount Hope should be extended. The minister has had the report in his hands for some time, and everyone in my area is wondering why no decision has yet been announced.

The report says that Mount Hope could be expanded. We are wondering why he has given no indication as to what he