

Oral Questions

Some Hon. Members: Question!

Mr. Nunziata: —also indicated to me that while a paid informer of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police he handled explosives. He said:

Between a week and three days before Air-India flight went down, I was told by two Sikhs that—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: It is not the place of the Speaker to comment upon the substance of a question except to say that all Hon. Members know that this is a matter of considerable concern to all Members in this House and to the Canadian public. I would expect that as the Member is the lead Member for the Official Opposition he would be given a courteous hearing. The Hon. Member will put his question.

● (1420)

Mr. Nunziata: Is the Prime Minister aware of Mr. Besso's statement, and I quote:

Between a week and three days before Air-India flight went down, I was told by two Sikhs that Air-India was a definite target of theirs, that they wanted to do in a plane, an Air-India plane.

Is the Prime Minister aware of that particular statement by Mr. Besso?

Mr. Mazankowski: Why don't you finish the quote?

Mr. Nunziata: And can he comment on whether or not he was made aware of Mr. Besso's statement?

Hon. James Kelleher (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, again we have another example of selective reading by the Hon. Member. Why does he not go on and finish the statement where it is alleged Mr. Besso said:

Now I wasn't told a specific flight or day or anything like that—?

Again, I repeat the statement made by the then Minister of Transport who said: "I should point out to the House that there was no indication that there was a specific threat to Flight 182".

I re-examined the matter fully this morning. The Commissioner of the RCMP was also involved. I can tell the Hon. Member that this statement stands. It was true then and it is true now.

EXAMINATION OF LUGGAGE

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston): The Solicitor General knows and the Prime Minister knows that in June of 1985 there was one Air-India flight a week.

Mr. Gauthier: One!

Mr. Nunziata: The Government admits it received advance warning. Air-India, in its statement of claim, is alleging

negligence on behalf of the Government of Canada. It says it gave written notice. Mr. Besso says he was a paid informer and that in fact there are tapes showing there was advance warning to the Government of Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Sit down!

Mr. Nunziata: If in fact—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Hon. Member, with good reason, has been given considerable latitude on preamble. Perhaps he could put his final question.

Mr. Nunziata: Again my question is addressed to the Prime Minister. If in fact there was warning in advance of something happening, or something about to happen, to an Air-India flight, would the Prime Minister of Canada tell us why each and every piece of luggage was not hand-searched? Why was it that 75 per cent of the luggage went through an X-ray scanner and the remaining 25 per cent was simply X-rayed by a hand-held wand? If in fact there was advance warning—

Some Hon. Members: Question!

Mr. Nunziata: —why did the Government not insist that each and every piece of luggage be hand-searched?

Hon. James Kelleher (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, again I would like to quote from a statement, this time from the Royal Commission conducted in India. At page 154 of his judgment, the judge stated:

Air-India had also requested and had received and arranged for extra security for the month of June, 1985.

As the Hon. Member well knows, not only is there an ongoing civil action, which is *sub judice*, but there is an extremely active criminal investigation into this heinous crime. I am sure the Hon. Member would not want to do anything that would in any way impede the successful completion of this investigation.

Some Hon. Members: Resign!

[*Translation*]

POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY—MINISTER'S POSITION

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Solicitor General concerning another aspect of the problem.

This informer, Paul Besso, revealed his identity as a police informer because the RCMP failed to keep their promise to provide him with new identification papers and protection as witness after he infiltrated a terrorist group. The Government had been aware of problems related to this program since last December when a Nova Scotia informer, Leonard Mitchell, was denied the protection of a false identity as an informer.

The Minister should have corrected the problem last December. Is he now prepared to accept his political responsibility in this case? Does he now intend—as he did in the case