

Motion, as modified, agreed to.

## QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

### AVIATION DISASTERS

#### LOSS OF AIR-INDIA AIRCRAFT—TOKYO AIRPORT EXPLOSION— POSSIBLE ACTS OF TERRORISM

**Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Leader of the Opposition):** Honourable senators, it would be, I think, quite inappropriate to begin Question Period without making a comment about the tragic airline disasters which have occurred since we last met. The world has been shaken by the loss of the Air-India jumbo jet and further shaken by the incident in the airport in Tokyo, which may indeed be related to the Air-India disaster. That is something we do not as yet know.

Apart from expressing our sadness and shock, I think it is the sentiment, certainly of those on this side of the house and, I am sure, of all honourable senators, to express our condolences to the bereaved and particularly to the Indian community in Canada, which has been so deeply affected by this tragedy.

Honourable senators, may I ask the Leader of the Government in the Senate, in that context, whether the government has been able to ascertain the cause of the loss of the Air-India jet; and if so, what the findings of any investigation have been to date on this matter?

**Hon. Duff Roblin (Leader of the Government):** Honourable senators, I concur entirely with the sentiment expressed by my honourable friend, which draws to our notice the magnitude of the tragedy which has struck the country over the weekend. We share with him his expression of sympathy for those involved. While it has been a shattering experience for the world, it has been a particularly shattering experience for Canada as it now appears that we are in the front lines of terrorism, a place where we never thought ourselves likely to be. The fact that bombs have been placed—or, apparently, explosives of some kind or another—have been placed on one aircraft for sure and possibly on another is something that must cause us great concern. It is only by the grace of God that the Canadian Pacific plane did not wind up in the ocean in the same way as the Air-India plane. It causes us all the greatest concern.

I do not think that air travel will ever be quite the same in Canada again. As honourable senators know, the government is putting into place, as fast as it can, whatever measures can be devised to guard the travelling public against further dangers of this kind, in the full knowledge, of course, that perfect protection is beyond our grasp.

Respecting the question raised by my honourable friend about the cause of the Air-India disaster, I am sorry that I cannot give him any information on that at the present time. The Air-India representatives, and others, Canadian and Brit-

[The Hon. the Speaker.]

ish, are examining the situation in Ireland, and elsewhere, with a view to seeing what facts can be determined that will throw light on this situation.

Up to the present time, to the best of my knowledge, there has not been a determination made as to what the probable cause of this disaster was. Rumours are afloat. People have their own ideas. But until such time as something more concrete can be developed by those who are examining the nature of this tragedy, I am afraid I can add nothing to the information that is already in the public domain.

**Senator MacEachen:** Honourable senators, it was reported on the weekend that some time ago the Indian authorities drew to the attention of the Department of External Affairs their perception that Canada might be a source of international terrorism. I am wondering whether it is true that such a representation was made to the Department of External Affairs, and if so, what action was taken to meet the perceived threat as alleged by the Indian authorities.

**Senator Roblin:** I read the same newspaper report, and I have also seen newspaper statements by others that action was taken with respect to their warning of the possibility of trouble—action that they took and that others took. But I wish to be precise about this matter, so I will inquire of my colleagues in order to provide a more satisfactory answer.

**Senator MacEachen:** I thank the honourable leader for that, because I think it is important to know whether the Indian authorities did make such representations and what steps we took in response thereto.

## TRANSPORT

### SECURITY AT CANADIAN AIRPORTS

**Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Leader of the Opposition):** Honourable senators, I have one other question for the Leader of the Government in the Senate dealing with the decision of the authorities in Canada to reduce the presence of RCMP security at Canadian airports, and particularly at Canadian international airports.

Will the government now respond to the appeal by the Canadian Air Line Pilots Association to restore RCMP security—which I understand was removed from Canadian airports for budgetary reasons?

**Hon. Duff Roblin (Leader of the Government):** I am not altogether sure that my honourable friend has it right, though he may be right with respect to the number of RCMP personnel at Canadian airports. My information is that up to the present time searching of baggage has been considered to be the responsibility of the airlines. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police were standing by in case they were required for any reason, including the discovery of questionable baggage in the system. However, up to the present time it has been the responsibility of the airlines concerned to check the baggage of people going on board their aircraft and they, as opposed to the government itself, have been hiring the people to do that