

Oral Questions

which resulted in complete abandonment of the SS-20s would be ideal, but that is the zero option which does not seem realistic to us. I would hope, and the language of the communique addresses this question, that discussions will permit a level of deployment agreed to in the discussions, or of non-deployment agreed to in the discussions. The communique, I think, would be very unwise, and I would be very unwise, to put forward any figure at this particular time because it would be another step at a bargaining table where I am not present. I do not think it is necessary now even for the United States to put a specific figure on the table. I hope we will be hearing very specific proposals, rejected or accepted, before the end of December.

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● (1430)

INDUSTRY**MAISLIN TRANSPORT LTD.—STATEMENTS BY DEPARTMENTAL OFFICIAL**

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Leader of the Opposition): I have a question to ask the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce following that asked by the Opposition House Leader. The Minister cautioned the Opposition House Leader with respect to raising matters which might affect publicly traded shares of Maislin. He should perhaps look to his own Department and give that same caution to an official of his Department who is quoted in this morning's *Gazette* as saying:

—"unless something very extraordinary happens, they will run out (of money) in the near future"—"probably" in June.

"Receivership is a possibility"—

Is the Minister in possession of that kind of information, or is the official in his Department, who has been quoted in this morning's *Gazette*, talking through a hole in his hat?

Hon. Ed Lumley (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): I am sure the Hon. Member, who is a former Minister, is quite conscious of the fact that we would all like to know about these unnamed officials or spokesmen who are always being quoted in the press. I just think it is more responsible for Hon. Members on both sides of the House not to discuss confidential commercial information. Also, to my knowledge, the reported statements have not yet been fully audited and sent to the shareholders. Thus, I think it is irresponsible for Hon. Members on either side of the House to comment on these alleged figures.

REQUEST THAT MINISTER DENY STATEMENTS

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Leader of the Opposition): It is very interesting, in view of the nature of the replies we have been receiving from the Minister in response to questions asked by Hon. Members on this side of the House—he appears to be

ducking, weaving, and evading any answers—to find that the article on Maislin today appears beside another referring to a "so-slippery customer", and that is what his answers appear to be.

Will the Minister deign to tell us whether the company will run out of money in the near future? Is that his view? Will he tell us whether it is his view that receivership is a possibility? Will he tell us whether his official was correct in saying that there would be a shortfall soon? Will he either confirm these statements or, for the benefit of the Maislin company which he purports to protect by his answers, will he make here today a public denial that any of these assertions attributed to his officials have any accuracy whatsoever? Surely he owes it to the Maislin Company he seeks to protect to clear the air, either by saying that his official is absolutely wrong or that there is some substance to those assertions.

Hon. Ed Lumley (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): First of all, Madam Speaker, the last people in the world whom I would be worry in about ducking or evading are those in the Official Opposition. Second, I will revert back to my original answer. It is not only the company but also there are 1,400 Canadian employees involved. There are shareholders involved. There are all kinds of sub-suppliers involved. I am surprised that the Leader of the Opposition, who claims to be a very responsible parliamentarian, would ask a question of such nature.

Mr. Jarvis: Also involved are Canadian taxpayers who have \$34 million at stake.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

CONTINGENT LIABILITY OF TAXPAYERS

Hon. Bill Jarvis (Perth): I would like to ask the Minister one question. It has absolutely nothing to do with the trading of shares, or employees, or anything else, but, rather, concerns the taxpayer. A guarantee of \$34 million of those loans means that the taxpayer may be called to pay, on the basis of the contingent liability, \$34 million. How does the Minister, who is the Minister responsible, rate that contingent liability to the Canadian taxpayer—high risk, medium risk, or low risk?

Hon. Ed Lumley (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Madam Speaker, when those financial statements are tabled before the shareholders and the Ontario Securities Commission—

Mr. Jarvis: Just rate it, Ed.

Mr. Lumley: —the Hon. Member will be able to make his own judgment in that regard.

Mr. Nielsen: Slippery customer.