

Oral Questions

• (1430)

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the government has never let any airline off the hook in collecting its taxes.

Because the airline industry is a cyclical business, we have from time to time accommodated some airline companies that were experiencing problems. We have accommodated some airlines in other ways. Each airline has been treated fairly.

We will continue to do so by being prudent and at the same time compassionate for the jobs of the thousands of people employed in the airline industry in Canada.

Mr. John Manley (Ottawa South): Mr. Speaker, lots of Canadians would like to see some compassion from the government when it comes to collecting taxes.

[*Translation*]

The minister's policies are in complete disarray. He has reduced them to some vague statements about capacity and about offering financial assistance through the back door. If he is unable to formulate a policy, why does he not table the review panel report that has been on his desk since January 30?

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I find it rather difficult to follow the hon. member's logic. Some time ago he worried about what we were going to do to ensure that a major company did not go bankrupt before all these avenues had been explored. We did what was necessary to give the company ample time to examine the situation and I think that so far this has produced satisfactory results.

As for the report by the National Transportation Act Review Panel, it has been submitted to us. We are now examining the report and we intend to table it in the House as soon as possible.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte): Mr. Speaker, the minister talks about satisfactory results. But this Minister of Transport is presiding over the disintegration of Canada's airline industry.

The president of Canadian Airlines is asking Ottawa to order reductions in passenger capacity. The president of Air Canada is asking for deferrals in landing fees. The president of Nationair is asking for federal cash assistance from the national government.

The question Canadians are asking is: What is this minister doing? When is this minister going to produce a plan to stabilize, to resurrect, to save the Canadian airline industry from a government-made disaster?

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, over-all, the airline industry is going through a very difficult period world-wide.

In other countries, for example the United States, many companies have gone bankrupt causing the loss of many jobs in the industry. However, Canada has been able to maintain all the airline companies in a living situation by applying the policy of being compassionate to the people and at the same time being fiscally prudent.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte): Mr. Speaker, this government's policies are killing our airlines. Unless the minister thinks he is Pontius Pilate will he immediately take all necessary action to prevent a disaster in the industry?

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, airlines throughout the world are going through a very difficult time. Airlines in a number of countries have gone bankrupt and many jobs have been lost. I must repeat that Canada is very proud of having managed to keep all its airlines alive and protect so many jobs in an important industry that is having a hard time restructuring but is doing so just the same.

We have seen the positions taken recently by the major companies who are starting to realize they had better reduce their capacity because, as they have admitted, there is overcapacity at the present time.

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[*English*]

ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Lynn Hunter (Saanich—Gulf Islands): My question is for the Minister of the Environment.

Our children are inheriting a country which is sick and diseased compared to our country only a generation ago. Canadians do not want to see this environmental deficit grow like the financial one. Under pressure last year, this government passed environmental assessment legislation to ensure a process that is fair, efficient, transparent and allows for a high level of public input.