

AIR CANADA

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS—PROPOSED TRANSFER FROM
GANDER TO ST. JOHN'S NFLD.

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transport knows that the taxpayers have spent millions of dollars upgrading Gander as an international airport, spending over \$6 million last year. Gander is open far more often than St. John's, which is as fogged in as the Minister of Justice. He should also know that if Air Canada does move, St. John's would require additional millions spent to accommodate that airline, and that other international flights could then very well follow Air Canada out of Gander. Is the Minister going to let Air Canada undermine the importance of Gander as an international airport?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Hon. Member would expect me to respond to Air Canada's request to transfer its international flights from Gander to St. John's. It has made that representation to me and I am considering all the facts related to the decision that could be made. I will consider everything the Hon. Member has referred to, in the course of coming up with that decision.

DEREGULATION POLICY INQUIRY

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West): Mr. Speaker, is it the Minister's policy under his proposals for deregulation to allow airlines to abandon expensive taxpayer supplied infrastructure whenever they want at airports, at great additional expense to taxpayers?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, Air Canada is a Crown corporation and it requested a transfer of flights based strictly on a commercial decision. We will have to respond to that and certainly take all those things into consideration. The Hon. Member talks about deregulation. We are not in the process of deregulation; it is regulatory reform that is going to be the package that will be developed. It will be a policy unique to Canadian needs, which will serve the best interests of all Canadians.

REASON FOR TRANSFER REQUEST

Hon. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Can the Minister confirm that the reason Air Canada is requesting to move its transatlantic flights from Gander to St. John's is that 80 per cent of the transatlantic traffic emanates from St. John's? There is no connecting flight to Gander. The infrastructure to handle that one flight a week is already in place.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, indeed that is the contention of Air Canada. There are others who dispute those figures. That is part of the ongoing assessment in dealing with this very important issue. Those things will be taken into consideration before a final decision is made.

Oral Questions

FISHERIES

EAST COAST—1986 GROUND FISH ALLOCATIONS

Mr. George Henderson (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. In light of the fact that the 1986 Groundfish Management Plan for the Scotia Shelf cuts the inshore fishermen by 21,901 metric tonnes and increases the allocation for the offshore vessels by 35,978 metric tonnes of fish more than what they caught last year, will the Minister meet with the inshore fishermen of Yarmouth and Digby to reconsider those allocations for a fair and equitable sharing of that resource?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, I also thank the Hon. Member for raising this very important question. Indeed, the allocations for the 1986 groundfish season on the Scotian Shelf are slightly reduced from the actual catches of last year. In some cases there have been offsetting increases granted, but the division in cod allocation for 1986 is based on the same formula as the division for 1985. At the present time I am exploring the possibility with my colleague, the Minister of Fisheries for Nova Scotia, of adjusting that division. I will be meeting with him on Sunday to discuss this question further.

INCREASE IN RED FISH QUOTA

Mr. George Henderson (Egmont): Also in 4RST, the red fish quota has been increased by 5,000 metric tonnes for the vessels located outside the Gulf. Fishermen who are traditionally fishing the Gulf fishery claim that those stocks are declining. Will the Minister reconsider that extra 5,000 metric tonne allocation that was given to the offshore outside Gulf vessels?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): The decision to add an additional 5,000 metric tonnes to the 4T red fish quota was based on a long-term plan adopted by the previous Government, of which he was a supporter. On the basis of biological advice it appeared there were sufficient increases in red fish stocks to absorb such an increase. That is the basis on which this decision has been made. At the same time we are looking for alternative stocks which might be fished by the fleet in the southern Gulf based in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, in order to give them additional advantage as well.

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THE ECONOMY

EXCHANGE VALUE OF DOLLAR

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): My question is for the Minister of Finance. The Canadian dollar has dropped to 70.72 cents U.S. this morning, the lowest level in the history of Canada. How does the Minister account for this continued devaluation of Canadian currency?

An Hon. Member: Blame it on the Liberals.