

Oral Questions

This is a clear indication that we have not reduced our preoccupation with safety, resulting in 35 per cent fewer accidents last year than in 1981. This is an indication that we have not relaxed our preoccupation with safety.

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question. The minister is quite committed to quoting figures in his answers today. Let me quote back to him Transport Canada's estimates for 1992-93 which on page 240, dealing with aviation regulation client base and aviation regulation workload, the graph shows a flat line between 1988-89 and 1992-93 for inspections done by his staff on air carriers.

• (1430)

If his own estimates show no change in the number of inspections and yet he says there are more inspectors, I want to ask the minister what has he got them doing? They certainly are not out there inspecting any more than they were five years ago.

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the record stands for itself. We had 700 accidents in 1981 when the movement of aircraft was much lower than today. Last year with five million movements of aircraft in Canada we had 449 accidents.

This is no consolation for the people who have been involved, but this is definitely an improvement of 35 per cent which indicates that we have continued to be very much preoccupied by safety in the sky. Again, proof that the Canadian sky is safe is the fact that Mr. Justice Moshansky has said today that he has no qualms using the Canadian carriers.

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, as the minister just repeated in the House, he said this morning at his press conference: "I can assure Canadians that Canada's aviation system is safe". That is basically the same kind of language that his four predecessors used in this House as far back as 1984.

What proof can he give to the Canadian public, other than numbers of inspectors, that it really is safer out there, that every time people get on a plane, they will get off again at their destination?

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Transport): Again, I repeat that there are fewer accidents. In 1991 there were fewer accidents with five million movements of aircraft. We had a reduction over the 10-year period of 35 per cent in the accident record. That by itself is an indication that the sky in Canada is safe and that we are still and

always will be committed to safety. The prime objective of Transport Canada is to keep the sky of Canada as safe as possible.

[*Translation*]

Hon. André Ouellet (Papineau—Saint-Michel): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. In December 1985, the then-Deputy Prime Minister unequivocally promised in this House that he would strengthen air safety. Today, in a very damning report, Judge Moshansky says on page 887 that the senior management of Transport Canada was effectively paralyzed by the government. The Deputy Prime Minister's own credibility is at stake. Can he tell us why he did not keep his word?

[*English*]

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, we know that the opposition party has always been very much against deregulation as it has been against so many other things that this government has done to improve the situation in Canada.

I repeat again that the record of the aviation industry in Canada over the past 10 years has shown an improvement of 35 per cent in the accident rate despite an additional number of movements. There were five million movements in 1991 with 449 accidents compared to 700 accidents in 1981. This is a clear demonstration that deregulation has not impaired the safety of the Canadian sky.

[*Translation*]

Hon. André Ouellet (Papineau—Saint-Michel): I wish to ask a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Obviously the Minister of Transport is trying today to cover up the mistakes made by the Conservative government when it deregulated. It is easy for him to say that the opposition opposed it at the time. He is right: both opposition parties opposed it, as well as the Canadian Pilots Association and the Canadian Air Traffic Controllers Association. The only one in step was the then Minister of Transport, and we know the consequences today. One thing is very clear: a many-page report directly condemns the government for this incident. Twenty-four people died because the necessary action was not taken. The government did not provide the Department of Transport with the funds required to have the air safety controls that the minister at the time had promised but did not deliver.