

Oral Questions

● (1420)

I went on to cite a number of them with respect to the broad ownership of shares, with respect to individual ownership, with respect to foreign ownership. Then I said, in the seventh point:

The major operational and overhaul centres which have been built up over the years in Montreal, Toronto, and Winnipeg are sources of great pride for Air Canada and fundamental to the success of this airline. No centres will be degraded. The overhaul base in Winnipeg will continue as a prominent and integral function of Air Canada and an aircraft fleet will continue to be maintained there.

That is all under the section of the guidelines and the commitment to legislation. I said it then, and I say it again today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SALE OF SHARES—GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the citation just given to us by the Deputy Prime Minister is a commitment from Air Canada that the Government will be unable to enforce because it is selling off the shares and has transferred to the private sector shareholders the voting rights of even the shares retained by the Government. It cannot fulfill that commitment.

The commitment the Deputy Prime Minister just read does not have legislative authority.

Mr. Mazankowski: Read it.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): It is not included in the series of legislative commitments, beginning with the corporate headquarters in Montreal, the two official languages, the employment equity. That commitment to Winnipeg does not have legislative backing and the hon. gentleman knows that. They are two different sections of the speech.

The Deputy Prime Minister's answer is absolutely incredible. It is just about as incredible as the statement by the Minister of National Health and Welfare over the weekend. According to the *Winnipeg Free Press*, the Minister said that the reason Winnipeg was not given the same legislative guarantees as Montreal—at least he admitted it—was that: "... there wasn't time to get it into the release". To quote the words in the *Winnipeg Free Press*: "Epp said there wasn't time to get it into the release".

There was time to get the legislative commitment to Montreal into the release, but not Winnipeg. Why was that legislative commitment not given then? Why was there not time to put it in the release? Is it that much harder for the Deputy Prime Minister to spell Winnipeg than it is to spell Montreal?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition, aided and abetted by the Member for Winnipeg—Fort Garry, is acting very pathetically and silly. That is really unfortunate.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Minister.

Mr. Mazankowski: What could be more clear than when I said:

While full details of this initiative will be contained in the legislation and will be developed by the Board of Air Canada over the coming months, I wish to inform the House further today of a few of the most important provisions under which this initiative will proceed.

That condition is laid out very clearly, as has been done in other privatization initiatives on which I have elaborated in the House on many occasions.

REQUEST FOR INCLUSION OF WINNIPEG MAINTENANCE BASE IN LEGISLATION

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, we still do not have an answer from the Deputy Prime Minister. In the statement to which he is referring, he is talking about legislative entrenchment only for the corporate headquarters in Montreal. When I asked him on April 12 whether he would include Winnipeg as part of that legislative protection, he refused to answer.

Why did they keep it a secret on April 12? Why did they not include Winnipeg as part of the legislative protection, as the Minister of National Health and Welfare now says they thought they would do? Why were they keeping it a secret then?

Who is playing games with this issue? Are we to take the word of the Deputy Prime Minister or of the Minister of National Health and Welfare? Obviously they are singing from a different songbook and are simply trying to scramble their way out of a situation that will put the Air Canada maintenance base in Winnipeg in deep jeopardy.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, we have just heard another Fort Garry fabrication of the truth. The facts are very clear. As I said, these are the items that will be enshrined in legislation. I also said that with respect to other items such as Montreal being the head office, and official bilingualism, there will be provisions in the legislation and/or articles of incorporation. I was clear then and I am clear today.

● (1425)

As I said, no centres will be degraded. The overhaul base in Winnipeg will continue as a prominent and integral function of Air Canada. The commitment I made then was to put it in legislation and/or articles of incorporation, and I do so here and now, right today, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Two weeks too late. Come on, Don!