

Oral Questions

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Dartmouth-Halifax East): Madam Speaker, our concern not just for the Port of Halifax and East Coast ports but for all Canadians with respect to this investment is that it now appears that the Government is favourably considering allowing Canadian National Railways to pour between \$32 million and \$200 million additional debt, over and above the \$62 million it has already plowed in when, in its own words, it has already acknowledged that this was a bad decision made seven years ago. Why is the Government now giving favourable consideration to allowing an even further indebtedness by Canadian National Railways, and hence the taxpayers of the country, in a company that is owned offshore, returns no profit, no taxes, and no jobs for Canadians? Why is that?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, we will not know before this decision is made if consideration was favourable or unfavourable. It is only when Cabinet says yes that we know the consideration was a favourable one.

With respect to the figures used by my hon. friend, I can only say that they do not correspond to the reality of the proposal before us.

Mr. Forrestall: Madam Speaker, I am not certain of the figures, and that is why I say it is somewhere between \$32 million and \$200 million. Eleven capital ships cost somewhere around \$200 million or \$250 million.

INQUIRY RESPECTING CABINET DECISION ON PROPOSED MERGER

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Dartmouth-Halifax East): Madam Speaker, for about three weeks now the Chamber and the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications have been held up in their examination of the annual report of Canadian National Railways at the request of the Government and CN in order to allow time for Canadian National to complete negotiations with Cast. Can the Minister tell us whether those negotiations are complete, whether submissions have been made in the due process to Cabinet for decision, and where that matter stands on the Cabinet and Treasury Board schedule? When will we know what the decision will be?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, my hon. friend will really have to wait to know the terms of the merger before he comments on it, and before I comment. I said that the proposals were before Cabinet, so consequently the negotiations between Cast and CN have been concluded.

● (1420)

INDUSTRY

MAISLIN TRANSPORT LTD.—GOVERNMENT LOAN GUARANTEE

Mr. Doug Lewis (Simcoe North): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. Last summer the federal Government guaranteed a \$34 million loan to Maislin Transport. Is the Government considering an extension of further loan guarantees to Maislin Transport at the present time?

Hon. Ed Lumley (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): No, Madam Speaker.

COMPANY LOSSES

Mr. Doug Lewis (Simcoe North): Madam Speaker, rather than ask whether or not the decision has already been made, I would like to ask the Minister another question. During the first nine months of 1982, while they were negotiating this loan, the company lost \$13.9 million. The final quarter figures have not been filed and the annual financial statements have not been filed. The Ontario Securities Commission has belisted them. They are in default at the present time. My question through you, Madam Speaker, to the Minister is this: did the company lose more than \$13.9 million last year, and does the Government have those financial statements yet?

Hon. Ed Lumley (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Madam Speaker, as I have indicated several times in the House, I feel it is most inappropriate to take advantage of our immunity as parliamentarians to discuss commercial, confidential information of a Canadian company—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lumley:—particularly when the shares of a company are publicly traded and where there are hundreds of jobs in the company, as well as its affiliates and suppliers at stake.

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DISARMAMENT

UNITED STATES CONTRIBUTION TO GENEVA NEGOTIATIONS

Miss Pauline Jewett (New Westminster-Coquitlam): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. As he will recall, the Summit text on arms policy stated, and I quote:

In the area of INF, in particular, we call upon the Soviet Union to contribute constructively to the success of the negotiations.

This assumes that the U.S. is already contributing constructively to the success of the Geneva negotiations, since only the Soviet Union is mentioned. Is it the view of the Prime Minister that the U.S. is in fact contributing constructively to the