

Oral Questions

● (1452)

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member misstates the situation rather seriously. Surely he knows it was not a decision of mine not to supply jet service to either the Brandon area or the Yorkton area. Indeed, I had asked for applications from airline companies to provide exactly those services. At one point in time I had those applications before the Canadian Transport Commission. In the end, in each case the application offering jet service was withdrawn by the applicant, not by any action of mine.

I still believe that the best service, in the long run, for Brandon and Yorkton would be the institution of a service that connects them with the east-west direction of the main line, likely with jet service. I have had continuing discussions with the airlines to encourage some interest on their part to come forward with that kind of application. I still stand ready to provide whatever help is required to make that kind of application work.

Mr. Dinsdale: Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that it is the minister's controversial decision to have the Government of Canada purchase Nordair, rather than allowing the sale of Nordair to Great Lakes Airlines to proceed, which cancelled out the proposal of Great Lakes to provide daily jet service to the 200,000 people in the WestMan-EastSask area, will the minister instruct Air Canada, which overflies this area several times a day, to provide this service at least until a regional air carrier is available?

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, I have spoken to the airlines about this question. I think that is as far as I really should go at this stage. I did say "airlines" in the plural, rather than in the singular. At this point in time, the appropriate thing would be for one of those airlines to make a judgment about providing this service and then to make an application before the Canadian Transport Commission. I look forward to that happening.

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[Translation]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**REFUSAL OF BENEFITS TO CERTAIN PERSONS—GOVERNMENT POSITION**

Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. Yesterday, in reply to a question asked by the hon. member for Gatineau, a question which to me seems very important, the minister stated that he had not had the opportunity to read the decision of the appeals tribunal concerning persons who reached 65 before January 1, 1976, and that as soon as he had read it he would have to determine what procedure would have to be followed. Can the minister tell us today if he is aware of the decision of the appeals tribunal as regards those 65-year old people who thought they were entitled to their unemploy-

[Mr. Dinsdale.]

ment insurance benefits, and if so, can he tell us if he will make a statement allowing those persons who were unjustly penalized to receive their benefits in the near future?

[English]

Hon. Bud Cullen (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, it will be necessary for legal counsel to look at this particular decision. There will be two decisions to be taken—a legal, or judicial, one and a policy one. I want to have advice from my counsel before I reach any conclusions on the next step.

[Translation]

Mr. La Salle: Mr. Speaker, in view of the minister's reply, can he assure the House that, since these people have indeed been waiting for three years and that January 1, 1979 is approaching, he will at least take a decision prior to that date and make it known to the House and, if so, that he will allow these people to receive the benefits to which they are entitled? That would be an excellent Christmas gift from the minister.

[English]

Mr. Cullen: It might be a nice Christmas present, Mr. Speaker, but in some instances these individuals opted to take their Quebec Pension Plan or Canada Pension Plan payments. In effect, they would be paid twice. Under the law, there is no provision for doing that. As I said, I have read the decision: that is why I indicated there is a legal interpretation to be made respecting a decision as to whether we file a further appeal or whether a policy decision on payments can be made in conjunction with the policy of Quebec.

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ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE**SENTENCE IMPOSED ON KEITH RICHARDS FOR POSSESSION OF DRUGS**

Mr. Bill Jarvis (Perth-Wilmot): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Solicitor General. It relates to the conviction and sentencing of Keith Richards of the Rolling Stones rock group.

The Solicitor General will recall questions put to him last Friday by the right hon. member for Prince Albert. It appears that the accused in this case, unknown to the judge who was pronouncing sentence, had a very lengthy criminal record, with some very serious charges resulting in convictions in jurisdictions other than Canada.

In view of the fact that this type of information is readily available to any Canadian prosecutor—out of CPIC, the RCMP computer in Ottawa—can the minister explain why the federal prosecutor in this case did not make the judge aware of Keith Richards' record? If the prosecutor did not have that documentary material on foreign convictions, can the Solicitor General explain why, when it is so readily available through the computer in Canada?

Hon. J.-J. Blais (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will recall that the initial question was asked by the