

Oral Questions

Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, it is a shame that this minister was not so impressed months ago because for months this grossly negligent Minister of Transport has stood idly by and ignored all the warning signs.

Canada's airline industry is now on the verge of collapse and he is finally quoted as saying the clock is ticking on the survival of Canadian Airlines.

Will the minister inform the House now, today, that his government is prepared to join the other partners he so eloquently spoke of in preparing and providing the necessary loan guarantees to Canadian Airlines so that we will not see thousands, and tens of thousands possibly, of people going on to the unemployment rolls in this country.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the hon. member for the opposition could explain how far his party is prepared to go with investing taxpayers' money in a plan without making sure about guarantees that the interests of Canadian taxpayers will be protected.

[*English*]

Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, it is much more than that. The minister is still on autopilot on this entire issue. He has refused to act on the federal aid package. He has refused to end the destructive competition that is tearing two airlines apart. He has refused to deal with the restructuring of the airline industry in this country.

What then is the minister prepared to do?

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, we have indicated that we are prepared to work with all the players now that all employees have indicated their intention to help their employer survive.

I put the question again to the hon. member: To what extent, to what amount, is his party prepared to commit the taxpayers' money without any guarantee that this will assure the survival of that carrier in the airline industry?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, even the friends of the government are bailing out over this problem because the government does not have a plan. We realize there has to be major reorganiz-

ing and restructuring in order to make the airline industry viable, protect the jobs, and to ensure that the Canadian based reservation system is intact.

We want to ask the minister, not what other people are doing, but what is the government going to put forward as a plan for the reorganizing, restructuring, and saving of this vital industry for Canada?

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, we have said all along that we are prepared to ensure there is a viable Canadian airline industry and that we have competition in this country. It is through these measures that we will ensure the survival of the carrier.

I put my question again to that party: To what extent, to what amount, are they prepared to put the money of the Canadian taxpayer at risk without guarantees on the future survival of that particular airline and the whole Canadian airline industry?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I recognize that the hon. minister is very anxious to ask questions. He will have the opportunity of being on this side of the House soon enough but for now, unfortunately, he has to govern.

In this proposal for the airlines one of the casualties is the Canadian based reservation system that is the underpinning for the entire tourist industry of Canada. We want to know what guarantee will the government provide that in any restructuring, the Gemini system which underlines and underpins the entire reservation computer technology system in this country will be preserved and maintained.

• (1440)

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, this is precisely why I have been asking the question. Either the hon. member and his party are suggesting there is government intervention in the judicial system concerning the Gemini question or they are saying we should invest some money, no matter what amount it is, in order to save the airline on a band-aid basis without guarantees for the taxpayers of Canada. We are trying to find a viable, fiscally responsible answer to this question.

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, this morning in Montreal the Minister of Transport told the Air Transport Association of Canada: "The marketplace is not a polite place". He went on to say