

*Oral Questions*

## IMPORTANCE OF TECHNOLOGY AND JOBS

**Mr. Brian Mulroney (Leader of the Opposition):** Madam Speaker, there was a \$1.4 billion write-off last year, which was larger than the amount the Government spent on job creation programs. There has also been a running loss of \$107 million in the first six months of this year for Canadair. If we take a look at the past, the Auditor General recommended, contrary to Government, that he be instructed to conduct a comprehensive audit on the company with regard to its past, but I am talking about the future.

Given its importance, the importance of that technology and the number of jobs involved, would the Prime Minister not refer this very important matter to an all-Party Committee so that we could work together to see whether it is possible to save Canadair and that technology, in terms of the future of the nation?

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Madam Speaker, I am happy to have the undertaking of the Leader of the Opposition that his Party wants to save Canadair. In view of the criticisms we have heard in the past year from members of that Party, we were concerned lest they wanted to repeat with Canadair the mistake they made 20 years ago with Avro. If they want to save Canadair, I think the best principle to apply once again is to let the management run it and, to have Parliament—

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

● (1420)

**Mr. Trudeau:** —to let Parliament take its responsibilities as it did in committee, in criticizing the financial statements.

In so far as objectives are concerned, I would welcome a statement from the Leader of the Opposition going beyond the one he just made in his question to the effect that Canadair must be saved, that the technology there is worth preserving in Canada, and that his Party supports that. If we can have clarification of these objectives from the other side, then I think we will have unanimity. In other words, if the Leader of the Opposition truly wants to save Canadair, the way to do that is not to put it in the political forum of this House; it is to run Crown corporations as they always have been run, independent of Parliament on a day-to-day basis, and responsibility for long-term objectives on the part of the Government, with reports to parliamentary committees as we have now.

## REQUEST THAT SELECT COMMITTEE BE APPOINTED

**Mr. Brian Mulroney (Leader of the Opposition):** Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister refers to a decision that was taken some 20 or 25 years ago. At that time, of course, he was an active supporter of the CCF-New Democratic Party and he may have taken a very different view. One thing that is unchanged is the requirement for parliamentary accountability.

We are talking about a company that has cost in excess of \$1.5 billion and which appears to be running at a rate of a

\$200 million loss for each of the next two years. We value the technology very strongly, recognize its importance, and are asking the Prime Minister quite simply, not in a partisan spirit, if he will indicate his acceptance of the notion of a select all-Party committee to sit down avec les intervenants to see if the future of Canadair can indeed, in the interest of the nation, be saved.

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition refers to my activities 25 years ago. I refer him to the activities of his own caucus in the past year. There are two committees which are now looking at Canadair, the Public Accounts Committee and the Finance Committee.

**Mr. Mulroney:** That is for the past. This is the future.

**Mr. Trudeau:** When we have recommendations from those committees and we see the Opposition showing real interest in the future, we will be able to comment on the recommendations of those committees. As I said, as of now all we have had has been negative criticism and a seeming will to destroy Canadair. I am very happy that the Leader of the Opposition now wants to join the Government in its effort to save this. If they want to continue in that spirit, we would very much welcome their participation in the committees that now exist.

**Mr. Mulroney:** I join the Government, Madam Speaker, because this Government needs every bit of help that it can get.

## CORPORATION'S FUTURE PROSPECTS

**Mr. Brian Mulroney (Leader of the Opposition):** The people of Canada will quite possibly support future plans for Canadair if all of the facts and the dollars are known—this is what parliamentary accountability is all about—if it is not hidden in the cracks or passed off to some committee or to a junior Minister.

I am encouraged by the Prime Minister's initial response. I come back to the question. It may result in a somewhat unusual procedure, but the problem is unusual, and we are talking about \$2 billion of taxpayers' money. Will the Prime Minister agree to the establishment of a select committee, duly empowered by this House of Commons, to examine future prospects and plans for Canadair, taking into account the responsibilities of management and labour throughout that enterprise? We would co-operate fully with that kind of initiative.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** For the third time, Madam Speaker, I am happy to take account of the co-operation which the Leader of the Opposition is suggesting. I propose to him that we wait for the reports of the committees of Parliament which are now seized with the subject. I am informed by our House leader that one committee is going to report within a few days. The Minister responsible will appear