

Oral Questions

Mr. Wilson: Offence is the best form of defence, Madam Speaker. The Minister did not respond to the question which I asked him and there was a very clear reason why, because he feels awfully uncomfortable with the action which the Government took a year ago.

FUTURE OF SERVICE INDUSTRY COMPANIES

Hon. Michael Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): If the Minister will not admit that this was a major policy error, why did he move so quickly to turn his back on the decision which had been taken by his predecessor? And would he state under what circumstances would the Government now enter into a bail-out of a service industry company, that is, a company which is dependent on other companies for its business?

Hon. Ed Lumley (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Madam Speaker, first of all I feel no more uncomfortable with my answer than the Hon. Member does with the flip-flopping of policy with respect to the industrial restructuring which he and his colleagues have advocated over the last period of time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lumley: I am surprised that the Hon. Member has not asked me any questions about the Chrysler Corporation. Without the help of the Government of Canada, the Chrysler Corporation, and the 11,000 direct jobs would not have been maintained. Why is he always focusing on one particular company?

With respect to his question on the industrial structuring of the service sector, Madam Speaker, there is already a great deal of assistance for the service sector, such as from my colleague, the Minister of State for Small Business, who is responsible for the Federal Business Development Bank. Industrial structuring takes place all the time, Madam Speaker, and we think that one of the major reasons why there has been a substantial number of job recalls and job creation in the private sector in the last year is because of these policies advocated by this Government over the last couple of years.

● (1420)

WHITE FARM EQUIPMENT LTD.—IMPLICATIONS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

Mr. Otto Jelinek (Halton): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of State for Small Business. Because of the uncertainty surrounding the possible liquidation of White Farm Equipment Ltd. which would adversely affect 100,000 farmers in Canada, not to mention the potential loss of hundreds of jobs within the dealership network, which is composed of small businesses, as the Minister responsible for that sector what is he doing to rectify this problem? More specifically, what recommendations has he made to Cabinet or his colleague, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, in this regard?

Hon. David Smith (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Madam Speaker, I think if the Hon. Member had paid attention to yesterday's Question Period he would have heard the answers given by my colleague, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, with regard to White Farm.

An Hon. Member: He was not here.

Mr. Smith: He may or may not have been here. The Minister is monitoring the situation very closely to see what can be done to keep that company going.

Mr. Jelinek: Madam Speaker, that answer indicates just how little the Minister knows or cares about small business, so I will direct my supplementary to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce on the same subject.

GOVERNMENT'S RECOMMENDATION TO COMPANY RECEIVER

Mr. Otto Jelinek (Halton): Madam Speaker, yesterday the Minister confirmed that he and the Government could not interfere in the decision made by the receiver for White Farm. Later in the same Question Period he went on to contradict himself by stating that he had in fact indicated to the receiver that his Government did not favour the proposed purchase of White Canada by White's TIC Division in the U.S., even though it had submitted the largest bid of \$9 million.

Can the Minister clarify his obvious contradictions in yesterday's statements and, at the same time, tell us why he is opposed to approving this U.S. takeover which would not only save hundreds of jobs in Canada but would inject much needed capital into an ailing industry?

Hon. Ed Lumley (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Madam Speaker, we now have a second member of the Conservative Party up on his feet in Question Period today asking for a bail-out of a firm, when his lead critic just criticized me for bailing out another firm. Please get your positions straight.

Again, Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member did not read yesterday's record. What I said yesterday was that the responsibility for the recommendation to the bankruptcy court rests with the receiver, not with the Government of Canada. We are not a lender, we are a guarantor. I did not say that we did not make a recommendation to the receiver.

The recommendation we have made to the receiver, and I will repeat it because the Hon. Member was not listening yesterday, encompasses three things. First of all, find someone, an individual or a consortium, who will undertake to operate that company as a going concern, second, to protect the dealer network right across Canada, which is very important, as advocated by his colleagues; and third, to preserve the leading edge technology which the people of Canada, through this Government, have financed. Finally, Madam Speaker—and I think the Hon. Member should again read the record—we are very confident that we are going to find someone, because two years ago when this company was bankrupt it was this Govern-