

Adjournment Debate

investment a substantial number of shares and even the opportunity to take complete control, whereas the Government of Canada has never asked anything in return from Quebecair.

And they would have us believe that the terms laid down by the Government of Canada do not help Quebecair. As far as I know, and I stress this point once again tonight, Quebecair is left with only 6 planes, and they make a mountain out of a molehill when I ask the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) what is the status of the question. I feel that Quebecers should be made aware of the financial situation of Quebecair and should also know that the corporation at one time had BAC-111 type planes. It decided to purchase some Boeing 737s and tried to sell its BAC-111s. Having failed, it made a further attempt to sell them. It still has these planes, as well as some 737s which are out of order most of the time. That is why I asked the Minister of Transport how things stood. I wanted as well Quebecers to know about the very expensive mistake Quebecair made when it changed its planes. Last year the Government of Quebec invested \$15 million to prevent any merger with Nordair, contrary to what people were thinking. We can say now that Quebecair is in a real predicament, and who is to be blamed for it? First, its management which has acted with sheer incompetence; its board of directors which was forced to approve the purchase of a certain number of Boeing 737 aircraft and then to authorize switching back to BAC-111's; the shareholders who stood idly by while management took all those irresponsible decisions; and especially the Government of Quebec which failed to put a stop to this extravaganza and blocked the merger with Nordair in the summer of 1981. In such a situation, the Canadian Government had a responsibility towards the employees, and that is why I asked the Minister what he was doing about them. What is going on? How is it that we on this side of the House, the Members from Quebec here in Ottawa, are the ones who will be taking over and making sure that Quebecair 2 becomes operational? Where does the Government of Quebec fit in? That is why I asked the Minister of Transport to tell me what is going on.

● (2225)

Mr. Rémi Bujold (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank the Hon. Member for Lotbinière (Mr. Dubois) for his comments and his explanations concerning Quebecair. Of course, these last few weeks, we could even say this last month, we have heard in Quebec certain gratuitous comments about Quebecair, and also about what the federal government, and more specifically the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) and

the Canadian Transport Commission, are supposed to have done to Quebecair in recent years. Naturally, the facts reported by the Hon. Member for Lotbinière are true, and the federal Department of Transport and the Canadian Transport Commission are certainly not to blame if such a situation now exists at Quebecair. However, when the Quebec Minister of Transport came to Ottawa for a meeting with his counterpart and asked for assistance to bail out Quebecair or solve the problems of this carrier whose services is essential to a large area of the province especially Eastern Quebec, he made certain statements which were then given widespread publicity in Quebec. This is at this point that the Members and the caucus from Quebec moved in and started to follow the situation closely, as is being done with all matters of great importance for Quebec. We had meetings with the federal Minister of Transport. There were meetings of the Quebec Members, especially those whose ridings are affected by this carrier, and we made suggestions to the federal Minister of Transport.

And this is why some ten days ago, last Monday to be more accurate, the Canadian Minister of Transport made an offer to his Quebec counterpart to solve the Quebecair matter once and for all. Later on, we received requests for further details from the Quebec government that did not seem to understand the federal offer very clearly. Details were submitted last Thursday, and once more, the Quebec government asked whether we could not consider putting Quebecair 1, the existing corporation back on its feet. The Minister of Transport clearly answered yesterday in this House, Mr. Speaker, that he and also we, Members of Parliament, from Quebec, did not see how we could salvage a company with such a huge deficit. However, the Minister of Transport gave another proof of his open-mindedness, and no later than today he indicated to his Quebec counterpart that he was ready to open negotiations to solve the issue. And next Monday, Mr. Speaker, a task force will meet to look at the possibility of finding a solution and whether we could not keep Quebecair afloat, which we do not believe possible, Mr. Speaker, but we will just the same make every effort to provide that service to people in Eastern Quebec and save Quebecair, and above all jobs for its employees.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order, please. The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at eleven o'clock.

At 10.29 p.m., the House adjourned, without question put, pursuant to Standing Order.