

*Oral Questions***AIR CANADA****FLIGHT ATTENDANTS' DISPUTE—REQUEST FOR IMPROVED OFFER**

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West): Madam Speaker, I should like to address a question to the Minister of Labour. It has to do with the dispute between Air Canada and the airline flight attendants. In view of the fact that representatives of the union have requested a meeting and Air Canada has agreed to meet with them on Thursday morning and again on Friday morning, the union hoping that Air Canada will come forward with an improved offer over what the conciliator recommended, but the only thing on the agenda on Thursday morning is a discussion on shutdown procedures and on Friday morning the union is to advise Air Canada about the results of the strike vote, would the minister request the president of Air Canada to be in attendance at those two meetings and to agree to an improvement of the conciliator's offer so that flight attendants receive parity with those of other airlines with regard to wages, vacations and guaranteed days off, with a view to reaching an agreement on Thursday or Friday morning?

Hon. Gerald Regan (Minister of Labour): Madam Speaker, the hon. member, of course, asks a question about a matter which is of grave concern to a large number of Canadians, and that is the possibility of a strike by airline stewardesses of Air Canada during the Christmas season.

Some hon. Members: Flight attendants.

An hon. Member: Sexist.

An hon. Member: Another Harry Hays!

Mr. Regan: Flight attendants.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Regan: I might say that the present situation is that the commissioner, Stanley Hartt, has reported and the recommendation in the conciliation report has been accepted by Air Canada. The flight attendants' union is voting on the recommendation at this time. The result of their vote will be known late Thursday night or early Friday morning.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Regan: I am certain that hon. members are, despite their sense of levity in the Christmas season, concerned about the fact that strike action should be avoided if at all possible in this serious situation. However, the hon. member will recognize that the necessity for any further negotiation between the parties is not evident until the outcome of the vote, which is at present being taken, is determined. I think it would be highly inappropriate to prophesy just how that vote will go. It certainly is the hope of the Department of Labour, and I believe of most Canadians, that an agreement will be achieved without a work stoppage.

Mr. Benjamin: Madam Speaker, the minister has about 72 hours, regardless of what the results of the strike ballot are, to

act, but he must assume that the ballot will be in favour of a strike.

In view of the fact that one of the problems is the length of the contract, and in view of the fact that that problem could be solved if parity between Air Canada air flight attendants and those of other airlines were achieved, which would result in a settlement, will the minister persuade the Minister of Transport to instruct or strongly advise the president of Air Canada to be present, and will the minister himself make himself available at the Thursday and Friday morning meetings to obtain a parity settlement, preferably with a 24-month contract or even with a 29-month contract?

Mr. Regan: Madam Speaker, I must say to the hon. member that the one thing I will not do is to try to carry on conciliation efforts here on the floor of the House. I do not suggest that that is in the best interests of collective bargaining, as the hon. member is well aware. I want to say to him that if he wants to conciliate, I think he should study the facts a little more in relation to what constitutes parity and whether he would also be seeking parity in relation to the hours of work, because that might cast another light on the situation. However, it is the role of the Department of Labour not to take sides but rather to provide assistance to the parties, as we have done throughout this struggle, in an effort to help them achieve an agreement. I think it is wrong for the hon. member to assume that there will be an adverse vote on Thursday night when the report on the vote of the flight attendants is made.

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THE BUDGET**EFFECT OF MEASURES ON SASKATCHEWAN OIL PRODUCERS**

Mr. Len Gustafson (Assiniboia): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Finance. Given the very serious situation which exists in western Canada in the oil industry, particularly in Saskatchewan where his budget is having such a devastating effect that companies are telling us now that the production of every barrel of oil in Saskatchewan is costing them from 25 cents to 70 cents more, to the point that they are considering shutting down production at a time when we should have a booming oil economy in western Canada, will the minister look into the situation, given the fact that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources seems to sidestep the issue, is unable to reach a pricing agreement and is not serious about the problem which exists in western Canada, and in Saskatchewan in particular?

● (1450)

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has stated on a number of occasions that we are prepared as a government to negotiate and have discussions with the province of Alberta, and with other western provinces, in an effort to reach a solution or agreement that would remove any concerns which may exist.