

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. The minister says that he will sit in on these discussions if his presence will be helpful. We are coming close to the deadline. Surely the minister has made his decision. Does the minister not think that the matter is important enough for him to sit in on the discussions? I think the House has the right to know whether he will sit in on these discussions or leave the discussions to his officials entirely.

Mr. Drury: Mr. Speaker, I repeat that it is not a question of whether I think the discussions are important; it is a question, rather, of whether I can be helpful. That ought to be the consideration.

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a supplementary question to the Minister of Transport. Has the government of Canada made the necessary arrangements to fulfil its obligations under international air agreements to foreign airlines flying into or over Canada? I believe my colleague from Gander-Twillingate raised a similar question earlier.

Mr. Jamieson: Mr. Speaker, it would be impossible for us to make these arrangements if the air traffic controllers were to go on strike. The carrying-out of that commitment on our part is obviously related to our ability to provide air control facilities. Should the strike come about, and I hope it will not, it would affect Canadian air space only because I assume international carriers would prefer to find other routes to their destinations instead of entering Canadian air space.

Mr. Lundrigan: A supplementary question to the President of the Treasury Board, Mr. Speaker. While he is considering the matter, will he also promise the House and the people of Canada as well the international organizations involved that he will introduce a greater degree of flexibility into the negotiations in order that we may resolve the dispute, avoid a strike, and give proper recognition to the international aspects of the problem?

Mr. R. Gordon L. Fairweather (Fundy-Royal): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question to the Prime Minister. What plans has the government to implement some of the recommendations of the Woods task force report so that the Canadian people will not be held ransom, as I think they now are, by strikes or threatened strikes in this country?

[Mr. Drury.]

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the question of the Woods Report was raised in the Speech from the Throne. We said that in the present session we shall introduce legislation in this regard.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, may I address another supplementary question to the Minister of Transport. Canada has certain obligations under bilateral agreements. If we fail to meet our obligations under these bilateral agreements to provide the necessary air safety controls, what position does the minister think Canada may be put in as a result of our not fulfilling our obligations?

Mr. Jamieson: Mr. Speaker, I cannot forecast what the situation will be in those circumstances. I can only say that I assume that in such cases the agreement either stands or falls on the ability of the parties to carry out their part of it. If we do not have air traffic controllers on duty it is obvious that we cannot fulfil our obligations in that regard. It is as simple as that.

Mr. Stanfield: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. May I ask the Prime Minister whether, in the event there is a failure to reach a settlement, the government intends to keep the House in session, as would certainly be the wish of hon. members on this side of the House?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for having offered his co-operation. If we decide to act in that way, we shall be thankful for it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Lundrigan: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Prime Minister. Have any representations been received from the international bodies which will be affected by the prospective strike? If so, what has been the response of the Canadian government to such representations, bearing in mind that the people at Prestwick have said they will not touch our aircraft with a ten-foot pole?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Shefford.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I do not know who has the floor.

Mr. Speaker: Is the right hon. gentleman rising for a supplementary question? The