

*Proceedings on Adjournment Motion*

**Mr. H. E. Gray (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I have been asked to reply to this question on behalf of the Minister of Transport. I can certainly understand the concern of the hon. member and I shall make certain that his eloquent remarks are drawn to the attention of the minister and to the attention of the management of Air Canada. I suggest that this is a matter the hon. member may well wish to pursue when the senior management of Air Canada again appears before the transport committee of this house.

**AIR CANADA—STRIKE OF MECHANICS—  
INQUIRY AS TO MATTERS IN DISPUTE**

**Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West):** Mr. Speaker, the point I wish to discuss this evening relates to a question I raised initially on April 23 and again on April 24 with the Minister of Labour (Mr. Mackasey). It arose as a result of the strike of machinists with Air Canada. My question was reported at page 7858 of *Hansard*. At that time I asked the minister directly to tell the house in general terms what might be the issues. The minister's reply was a simple "no". In other words, the minister refused to give the house any indication of what, in general terms, might be the issues in this dispute. I had asked whether it was a matter of seniority, fringe benefits—and fringe benefits cover all sorts of sins of omission and commission—or wages. The minister said that the hon. member, meaning myself, had described the problems.

I wanted the minister to take the house into his confidence a little more than that. After all, the minister said today that the country is undergoing grave inconvenience because of this strike. Therefore, we should know why we are being put to this grave inconvenience. For the second time this union has struck Air Canada, which has an unblemished record in regard to labour relations. We want to know why these people are holding this country to ransom. This is not a case of their trying to get more money out of Air Canada; this is a hold-up of the country. This is a small union, an international union, and there is no indication that they are not taking instructions from elsewhere. As I say, they are holding the country to ransom.

My complaint is not so much about the actions of the union, but the fact that the minister has given us a clear example of what he and his colleagues have been doing in respect of answering serious questions in the

[Mr. Schreyer.]

house. First of all, there is the notorious roster system which means that members cannot ask questions on certain days because the minister concerned is not here. There is a very moot point as to whether the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) is empowered, under the rules of the house, to have a minister deliberately stay away from the house. Standing Order 5 says that members shall attend this house. Members do excuse themselves from the house, but if they do it is not because the leader of the party has said: You shall not appear in the house. I think this practice is wrong.

Also, Mr. Speaker, on many occasions questions and grievances have been raised about the practice of ministers saying one thing in the house and then running out into the foyer and saying something different into a microphone. This is precisely what the Minister of Labour (Mr. Mackasey) did the other day. After his categorical refusal to tell us what were the issues, other than a vague reference to those matters which I had enumerated as casual examples—and there are more—the minister went outside the chamber and said something that was entirely different. I have seen the transcript of what he said. I do not have it with me, but I can tell the house that it makes interesting reading. The minister went into considerable detail outside the house, so much so that members of the press who were present at that interview called me later in the afternoon and said: Did you hear what the Minister of Labour had to say outside the chamber? He gave us the answers that he refused to give you inside the chamber.

I do not think we should put up with this sort of thing. This is what we are complaining about. I have had many instances, starting with the Prime Minister who is one of the worst offenders, of ministers giving no answer, or a partial answer, and then going outside the chamber and adding to or glossing the answer given in the chamber. Ministers are human; they suffer from foot-and-mouth disease. They go outside the house and correct what they have said inside it, after one of their executive assistants or advisers have told them what sort of fools they have been. This happens. The minister then corrects outside the house the answer that he gave inside the house, and to the public and he looks like a well-informed, intelligent individual. No one is in the foyer to question him; no one is there to bring him up short. He can make any sort of misrepresentation, innocent or otherwise, in that interview.