

Air Transport
AIR TRANSPORT

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS—ANNOUNCEMENT
OF SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTE

Mr. Speaker: Before the minister makes an announcement he has to obtain leave of the House to return to motions. Is this agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Hon. C. M. Drury (President of the Treasury Board): I am pleased to announce to the House that the government and the Canadian Air Traffic Control Association have reached agreement on a contract, subject only to ratification by the association membership.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Drury: The agreement covers all of the issues that were in dispute, including hours of work, pay, terms of agreement, vacations, training, shift differentials and designated holidays.

The parties have agreed not to release further details until the ratification process is completed.

I would just like to add my own personal tribute to the hard work and responsibility shown by both sides of this dispute, whose representatives have been working hard at it behind closed doors since this morning. It is due to their hard work that we have this agreement.

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): I would just like to say very briefly that I am sure all members of the House and the country at large will be pleased to learn that an agreement has been reached, subject to ratification which we hope will be forthcoming. I hope that this agreement will not only bring peace and continued service for those travelling by air during the Christmas holidays but that it incorporated also provisions which will ensure an adequate ground service and conditions to provide suitable recruitment; that, in brief, it will ensure that this very highly skilled personnel will be available in sufficient numbers to provide safe air travel to people using Canadian airports and air space.

As I said, I am sure that every member of the House and the whole country will be greatly relieved. I hope that it will be possible for the government—I say this without being facetious—to develop machinery to avoid such cliff hanging situations.

[Mr. Trudeau.]

● (6:00 p.m.)

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, I am sure there will be a sigh of relief across the country that a settlement has been reached, subject to ratification by the government of Canada and the Air Controllers Association. A great many people have been perturbed, specially those who were planning either to have some of their family return for Christmas or were planning to go somewhere for Christmas to visit friends and relations. I am sure many hon. members have had, as I have had, most pathetic letters and telephone calls from people who thought their season's arrangements were going to be upset in the event of a strike. I know there will be a great feeling of satisfaction that there will be no strike and that air services will continue at a normal rate.

I would like to express the hope for two things. The first is that the Minister of Transport (Mr. Jamieson) is going to continue with his studies into the whole question of strain and tension on air controllers. The evidence in the United States indicates that this is a group of workers who have special stress and who ought to have some special working conditions. It also indicates the need for training a great many more of them so that they will not have to work the very long hours they are required to work now, and this not only because of the effect on their health but because of the effect on the safety of the community.

Without injecting a jarring note or wanting to spoil the happiness of the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) at having reached a settlement, I wish to say it seems to me that these negotiations with government employees ought not to be dragged out for six or seven months on some issues that it seems to me perfectly obvious could have been settled long ago. For instance, you get simple requests that they should not be required to work more than 12 hours in one day, or more than ten consecutive days without a day off. I would have thought these things could have been settled long ago. The real question, Mr. Speaker, and may I say—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. May I bring to the attention of hon. members—would the hon. member kindly resume his seat? I have to bring to the attention of hon. members that it is now beyond six o'clock, and if we are to proceed with the debate there should be unanimous consent. At the same time, I think