

Adjournment Debate

potatoes are sold. However, due to current circumstances, we are not applying any pressure for repayments until this issue is resolved.

● (1810)

NATIONAL DEFENCE—AIRCRAFT—ALLOCATION OF WORK—
STARTING DATE

Mr. Dan McKenzie (Winnipeg-Assiniboine): Mr. Speaker, today I questioned the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Lamontagne) regarding future layoffs of 420 Air Canada employees, and specifically the 150 Winnipeg Air Canada maintenance workers who are to be laid off in September. I am suggesting another alternative to the unemployment of Air Canada maintenance workers in Winnipeg.

In early 1984 it will be necessary for the Armed Forces 707s to be overhauled. Winnipeg has provided this service in the past and with their excellent facilities and skilled workpersons who are eager for the employment opportunity I believe that the upcoming contract should be awarded to Winnipeg. Not only is Winnipeg a logical choice, but this would provide a solution to the problem of layoffs as well as lessen the hardship on the over-burdened Unemployment Insurance purse.

As this overhaul contract is scheduled for early 1984, I am further suggesting that the date be advanced to September of 1983, the time Air Canada expects to lay off its employees. I understand that the 707s are experiencing nose landing gear problems, Mr. Speaker, so it would be advisable to bring them in for overhaul earlier. I would ask that the Minister of National Defence consider my proposition with a view to taking immediate action.

I would also like to stress that under no circumstances should this contract be awarded to the Montreal area as is feared in Winnipeg. As it is, too many contracts have been awarded to Montreal and Quebec, only to find that as a result of these deals additional loads are placed on the backs of the taxpayers.

Take as an example our infamous Canadian white elephant, Mirabel Airport. As it stands now, and that is about all it does, it is costing Canadian taxpayers \$1 million a week. Another example is Canadair, something that I have warned the Government about since 1976. We now see that this Crown corporation will be laying off 570 people by mid-July and it will cost Canadians \$2.3 billion to bail the corporation out. In 1976 I made clear my concern about Canadair and the \$50 million loan guaranteed by the Government. Canadair would have to sell 500 aircraft in order to recover from its disaster course. Now Canadair is looking for \$2.3 billion, and to break even it will probably have to sell thousands of aircraft. The next obstacle for consideration is to determine whether or not there is a market for these aircraft.

The west was also overlooked when Quebec was chosen to receive 48 per cent of the new fighter aircraft spinoffs. Another example of the same situation is the aerospace training centre. In August of 1981, it was recommended by a task force study that Winnipeg be the site for this centre. However, due to the fact that the Quebec caucus of the Liberal Party and its Chairmen stated that the centre would be built in

Montreal or not at all, the chances for Winnipeg receiving the centre quickly diminished, even though it had been determined that Winnipeg was indeed the superior location.

It is time that the Liberal Government stopped writing off the West and started looking at the vast amount of skilled ability the West has to offer. I need not remind the House that every Canadian bears the weight of unemployment which only creates low morale and high taxes.

It has been proven that the Winnipeg Air Canada maintenance workers are exceptional candidates for the 707 overhaul work, and I would strongly recommend that very serious consideration be given to the awarding of this contract to Winnipeg in September of 1983. The Winnipeg Air Canada maintenance workers, my Progressive Conservative colleagues and I will welcome an encouraging reply from the Liberal Government.

Mr. Stanley Hudecki (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, the specific question that the Hon. Member asked the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Lamontagne) this afternoon concerned the possibility of accelerating the time frame in which the DND 707 fleet would be overhauled and to do this by offering the contract to the Air Canada facility in Winnipeg to avert the layoff of 120 machinists.

After listening to his preamble and comments this evening I question very much the credibility of the statements he has made. I am particularly upset by the statement he made concerning the efficiency of the fleet at the present time. He referred in an off-hand way to some problem dealing with the landing mechanism of these planes. I think that is an irresponsible statement. What he is doing is using scare tactics that may cause concern to those people who are using that fleet now, and that is unfair to the very mechanics and machinists he is trying to keep employed.

● (1815)

I question his credibility in talking about regional disunity and favouritism. We do not need that at this time. He has already asked these questions on two previous occasions and seems to expect the adjournment debate to involve two other departments, namely Transport and Labour, on the subject of jobs for mechanics.

We are well aware of the quality of workmanship available for overhaul in the machine shop in Winnipeg. We have no quarrel with the quality of work carried out by the machinists, but it is not our intention to get into issues that involve two other departments.

With respect to the specific DND requirement to overhaul 707s, this work has been done in Winnipeg in the past. The Department has been satisfied with the quality of the work. However, the planes are not scheduled to require overhaul until some time in 1984. If the planes do not require the overhaul the Department is not in a position to request an accelerated program. To consider such an overhaul would not only be destructive to the good functioning of the Canadian