

Government Orders

which allows an employee the right to refuse work when they believe it reasonably constitutes a danger.

Here are the reasons this woman refused to board that aircraft. Lima is the capital of Peru. It not only currently suffers from a cholera epidemic, but it continues to be the scene of continual rebel and terrorist violence. Only five days before this woman refused to fly to Peru, on April 1, 1991, a Canadian Airlines flight attendant was abducted 300 yards from his hotel by four men who identified themselves as police. He was taken in a car, roughed up and robbed.

Canadian Airlines flight attendants currently have layovers or rest periods for as long as 30 hours in Lima. They are taken from the airport to their hotel in a battered bus manned by an armed security guard and dropped off. However, the pilots, who have agreed to extend their duty day beyond their contract maximum, do not lay over in Lima, but are flown to Mexico at the end of their flight day.

The day after this woman exercised her right to refuse unsafe work, terrorist bombing incidents occurred at more than 30 buildings in Lima, Peru including, I might add, the Canadian embassy and five other foreign missions.

In its March 1991 travel advisory for Peru, the Department of External Affairs warns that both street crime and terrorism are serious problems in several cities and regions. Since the conflict in the Persian Gulf, there has been a marked increase in the attacks made against foreign diplomatic missions, restaurants, cultural centres, businesses and public areas in Lima. The notice also urges visitors to consume only food prepared under hygienic conditions, carefully cleaned fruits and vegetables, peeled and preferably cooked, bottled water or water purified by boiling it for 10 minutes if possible.

Canadian Airlines own guidelines for the cholera epidemic include no fish, no salads, no showers, and no water that is not gasified and sealed.

Within hours of this woman's refusal to board that airline, two Department of Labour safety standard officers investigated her claim on site at Pearson airport. A verbal rejection of the claim was given, with a written decision to follow, on the grounds that there is no danger or risk from cholera and that the foreign nature of the job site and the security threat put her beyond the jurisdiction of the labour code.

Yet, there is clear and present danger. I have illustrated in my remarks the clear and present danger that led this flight attendant to refuse to fly to Lima, Peru. Forcing workers to go to Lima is not in the spirit of how we all believe our workers in Canada should be treated.

To provide for this worker the airlines could provide layover flights to Mexico, but they have said they will only do so if the attendants extend their duty days even longer than 14 hours. That would be simply replacing one safety hazard with another. Overtired, overworked flight attendants are not safe.

It would be very useful in this legislation to have an amendment that would restrict the duty days of flight attendants to reasonable and humane hours. In addition, we would expect that either the Minister of Labour or the Minister of Transport, or both, would work to resolve how a worker is to be treated when he or she leaves the country.

One of the other areas that I would like to address regarding this legislation, and another where I would suggest an amendment would be useful, is the whole question of security at airports. I rose in the House last Thursday and made a statement regarding one security firm at Pearson airport which is undercutting another security firm to secure a contract with the airport for its airport security. This is not, I might add, isolated to Pearson. In fact, this is happening at a number of airports across the country. We have recently seen the outcome of such a situation with the dispute that went on at the Edmonton airport.

The particular situation that I am speaking about concerns Terminal 1, where the security firm Aeroguard is demanding a wage cut of \$2 an hour from its employees as well as elimination of the group insurance plan. The company is threatening the 100 passenger screening agents with layoffs if they refuse these cuts so it can get a renewal of the contract, so it can win the bid.

This kind of tactic invites raiding, it invites instability in that work group and it does not even provide reasonable job security. There is certainly no reason to develop any job pride. Without pride, without continuity of service, the ability to do a good job as a screening agent is hurt. I think we would all agree, certainly the members in this House who fly thousands and thousands of kilometres a year would agree, that it is very important that these people are very skilled and very committed to the work they do and should be encouraged to develop pride in