

Increased Cost of Living

are earning \$3.17 an hour and are working a 40-hour week. This amounts to \$507.20 per month.

As the minister knows, they were offered, according to the Geddes recommendation, a 12 per cent increase for the first year and a 6 per cent increase for the second year. Labour turned down that offer. I ask hon. members to calculate what an increase of 12 per cent and 6 per cent would have meant. These people want only a year contract. The responsibility of any government is to settle this strike. I may be sorry that this government is in office, but it is and has to take the responsibility. Do you realize, Mr. Minister, that there are 12 groups of employees working for Air Canada? I found out today that under their contracts with Air Canada any one of these groups strike at any time.

Therefore, this strike could be settled tomorrow, another contract would become due for renegotiation and we could be faced with another strike next Monday morning. This government talked about productivity and getting our economy rolling, which was a great Kennedy phrase the government borrowed to get back into office. Is it not about time the government measured up to its responsibility? These groups must be brought together; you cannot have 12 groups with 12 different contracts lapsing at any given time.

Mr. Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, would the hon. gentleman permit another question?

Mr. Woolliams: Certainly.

Mr. Nicholson: Does he not agree that a recommended increase of 18 per cent over a period of two years is a reasonable one, whether or not it is acceptable to the workers being another matter? Also, was the proposed increase not over two years, and not just for one?

Mr. Woolliams: My answer is categorically yes. But that offer was made and the strike is still on. The government is doing nothing about it. It has the responsibility to solve this problem. I asked the Prime Minister the other day to introduce legislation—I speak for myself in this regard—to bring the strike to an end, because we cannot allow the continuation of a strike that is adversely affecting an essential industry of this country.

I was very impressed with a speech made today by one of the Liberal members, the member from St. John's West (Mr. Cashin). We have the New Democratic Party playing ducks and drakes with the economy of this

[Mr. Woolliams.]

country and then crying about the state of our economy because of strikes. But they are praying for strikes and confusion; this is what they want. I emphasize again that there are 12 different groups—

Mr. Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman has not replied to my question. I asked whether the proposal did not cover a two-year period. Does the hon. member not realize this?

Mr. Woolliams: I know it is for a two-year period; a 12 per cent increase the first year and 6 per cent the second year. Air Canada is desperate. They say: If we sign a one-year contract with these people, a year from now they will be out on strike again, and we will have 11 contracts with 11 other groups falling due. This sounds terrible, but it is the fact. I believe the settlement offer was fair, but I am not on the negotiating team. If the minister thought it was fair, he should have appointed a mediator to tell both sides what the situation was, and talks should have continued on a 24-hours a day basis, not two hours a day. This is where the irresponsibility of this government lies. The situation today is that we are faced with this strike, and there is no air passenger or express service in Canada. Let us look at what the newspapers say about the situation:

After day-long talks that proved fruitless in breaking the deadlock, the Air Canada strike involving 5,200 mechanics, ramp and station attendants will enter its tenth day Wednesday when the parties reconvene.

The government has waited 10 days for the strike to be settled. They will wait 20 days or 30 days, because its policy is wait and wish. This article, which appeared in today's edition of the *Montreal Gazette*, continues:

Michael Pitchford, general negotiating chairman for the International Association of Machinists (CLC), described the situation as "worse than it was". The union had given evidence of flexibility, he said, by reducing its fringe demands by three per cent, but there had been no change in the company's position.

The union's contract renewal demand now stands at a pay increase of 20 per cent plus six per cent for fringe benefits.

● (5:40 p.m.)

If one can rely on newspaper reports, there is very little difference today between the offer made and what they are trying to negotiate except that Air Canada wants to have a two year contract. The company says it cannot have a one year contract with 12 different groups. I wish to make one correction, that does not mean that there could be a strike of 12 groups unless it was a sympathy