

Adjournment Debate

understand what such a notation might mean to a man's or woman's career. It would take a person of exceptional strength of character to resist such pressure. I can offer no proof of my conversations because the people concerned, again understandably, were unwilling to sign affidavits. I am convinced that Air Canada is doing all in its power, legal and extralegal, to break this new union. It is about time that the minister took official notice of the facts and told Air Canada that such conduct on the part of any Canadian business, let alone a Crown corporation, was not acceptable.

I wonder in this regard what the travelling public would say if they became aware of the fact that the reason they have difficulty in finding seats on aircraft travelling between Winnipeg and Montreal, especially at the end and the beginning of the week is because as much as half the space on scheduled flights has been blocked off to enable personnel from Montreal, told to work in the Winnipeg finance section, to travel back and forth. I wonder what the travelling public would say if they knew that entire aircraft had been diverted for the purpose of transporting strike breaking personnel, voluntary and press ganged, between Montreal and Winnipeg. I think it is about time the government took official recognition of the facts and told the management of Air Canada to cease and desist from these practices.

With respect to the second question, that of granting leave to the unions to prosecute Air Canada under the terms of unfair labour practices legislation, I should like to note that I have sympathy with the minister's belief that granting such permission would be counterproductive so long as talks or mediation procedures, having some chance of success were under way. But I have seen no evidence of that since last Friday.

Last night union members voted almost 100 per cent to reject the latest company offer. Here it is important to understand that the union had offered to accept the company's wage offer and the company's position with respect to job classification if, in turn, the company accepted the union's position on seniority. Put simply, the union's position is that in the event of lay-offs the last person hired, the person with the least seniority, should be the first person laid off. That is a fairly standard union contract clause and a reasonable demand.

Further, the union requested that if subsequent adjustments meant more senior personnel had to undertake new tasks, they be granted 30 days in which to learn the new job. To me that is, once again, a reasonable approach to job security. But the position was rejected by the airline despite union concessions on two other highly contested and important items, job classification and the wage package.

Well, perhaps it is now time for the minister to grant leave to the unions to prosecute Air Canada for unfair labour practices in an effort to precipitate a settlement. Remember, this is a newly certified bargaining unit engaged in its first negotiations. In the initial phases of those negotiations the company raised the salaries and provided promotions to some 80 of the 450 odd people involved in what was, to me, a clear attempt to break the union. Beyond that, the union alleges that the company

[Mr. Rowland.]

provided inaccurate information on at least one key subject to the conciliation board.

Well, let us have the truth. Let us send the case to court. If the minister is not prepared to do that in an effort to provide a catalyst to bring the parties to terms, let us hear what action he is going to take. Is he ready to intervene himself? This dispute involves about 450 workers. The strike has gone on for eight weeks. It will eventually affect the efficiency of our largest air carrier. I think it is time for the minister to stop agonizing and start to act.

Mr. Charles Turner (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, in a final effort at the request of the mediators on July 11, the company put forward a complete draft of a new agreement, including movement in the primary areas that have been specified by the union. These improvements were in regard to union recognition, retroactive pay, pay scales, seniority, shift scheduling and union participation in the revision of classifications.

The proposed agreement provided for wage increases of 7 per cent, fully retroactive to September 25, 1972, plus 8 per cent increase in all rates compounded and an additional \$10 on top of each wage scale, effective at the signing date of the agreement, plus another 8 per cent increase on all rates compounded one year from date of signature. The contract was to run for two years and two weeks from the date of signing, which would be the same length as an agreement signed by the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers recently. On July 12, after studying the company's latest proposal, the union committee advised the company and the mediators that they would not accept the proposed settlement.

In view of the strike of these employees which has now lasted seven weeks, the mediators suggested that the final offer which the mediators had secured from the company should be presented by the union to its members to permit them either to accept or reject the proposed contract themselves. The union indicated that they were considering a number of alternatives which they would submit to their executives before taking action.

● (2220)

In regard to the first question by the hon. member for Selkirk (Mr. Rowland), he is referring to a request to the minister for consent to the making of a complaint pursuant to Section 187(5) of the Canada Labour Code.

The particulars in support of allegations under Section 148 outline their arguments to support their contention that the company failed to bargain in good faith. The second section of the allegations refers to particulars in support of allegations under Section 148(b). They contend that the company reclassified as "permanent, full employees", with a resulting revision in their rates of pay and fringe benefits, a number of people who had formally been classified as "casual" employees. This fundamental change was made without notice to C.A.L.E.A. and without C.A.L.E.A.'s consent. This matter is still being processed. When all of the information that is required by the minister has been obtained, he will be in a position to make his decision on this request to refer this matter to the board for a hearing.