

This is a company that was finding it difficult to survive. It was finding it difficult to maintain the some 2,500 Canadian jobs that are presently being maintained by that company. Its debt load was very, very severe.

It has recently had an offer from the British concern to put \$330 million of fresh equity into that company, with the establishment and the technology remaining in Canada. This is being done with a view to making the company a genuine northern telecommunications company in relation to the British Telecom operation, but on an international basis. Surely the Hon. Member will give us an opportunity to look at the details and to make sure that, within those parameters, the conditions to which the Hon. Member is referring will in truth be met.

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LABOUR RELATIONS

AIR CANADA STRIKE—EFFECT ON WOMEN WORKERS

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister says that the Government has a genuine commitment to enhancement of the rights of women. I am sure he does recognize that the effect of the dispute going on with Air Canada at the moment, if Air Canada were to win, would be to reduce further the economic opportunities for women to work full-time in the work-place at reasonable salary levels with reasonable benefits. With that in mind, will the Prime Minister move to suggest, by way of a directive given to the Departments and agencies of Government, that until this matter is resolved the departments and agencies should not purchase airline tickets from Air Canada?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make it very clear to the Hon. Member, and to all Hon. Members of the House, that the proposal that Air Canada is offering regarding job security is unparalleled in the airline industry. Furthermore, it is the wish of Air Canada to treat full-time and part-time employees on a more equitable basis and to ensure that they are entitled to pensions, dental plans, and seniority.

The allegation that full-time employees will be laid off to make way for part-time employees is untrue. The fact of the matter is that, under the proposal that is being negotiated at the present time, seniority will govern any future layoffs if they should occur, a policy which heretofore has not been in existence.

REQUEST THAT PRIME MINISTER INTERVENE

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Prime Minister. Given that the Minister of Transport does not appear to understand that what is being offered by Air Canada is a reduction of the number of full-time positions and an increase in the number of part-time positions which pay a lower hourly

rate, and therefore undermine the economic stability of the women who are employed in those positions, will the Prime Minister show leadership and put some kind of commitment behind what he says he believes, by telling Air Canada that the Government will not deal with it until it meets the Government's requirements regarding equality for women?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member does not have to engage in the collective bargaining process. He can certainly phone his friends to give them that advice. The fact of the matter is that the unions themselves have recognized the need for more part-time workers. They have agreed to increasing the level of part-time workers to 30 per cent. Air Canada has a somewhat different view, but that principle has been accepted. It is simply a matter of the detail that has to be negotiated further. I think the best thing that could happen is that, rather than debating this issue on the floor of the House of Commons, the Hon. Member should encourage the union leaders to get back to the bargaining table. Perhaps it is time for some enlightened leadership on their part.

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[Translation]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

MODIFICATIONS TO SYSTEM—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mrs. Thérèse Killens (Saint-Michel-Ahuntsic): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister.

In his paper "A New Direction for Canada", on page 78, the Minister of Finance said that the Government might also give consideration to more far-reaching changes to the unemployment insurance system. The Minister wondered, for instance, whether maternity benefits should be reconsidered. The reason given by the Minister of Finance for transferring the program was that he wanted to make things easier for small businesses. Women object to the fact that maternity benefits are considered a social program. They do not want these funds to come from the Government's Consolidated Fund. They are opposed to maternity benefits being removed from the unemployment insurance program. Could the Prime Minister give the House the assurance that he will see to it the program is continued?

[English]

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member has posed a question that has been raised in the House on several occasions. The response that has been given is that the Unemployment Insurance Fund is in fact going to be reviewed at the request of all of those involved in the Unemployment Insurance Fund, including employers, employees, women's groups, and labour unions. That over-all review will take place. Until that review is completed, no changes of the nature to which the Hon. Member alludes will be made.