

Oral Questions

to the Canadian public if a walkout actually took place, he has considered proposing to the pilots' association and to Air Canada the intervention of a mediator before the walkout rather than after the walkout as in the case of the Post Office workers?

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): I think that when there is a labour contract everyone in this House should agree that the labour agreement should, first of all, be respected. The labour agreement should be followed. If there is a grievance procedure provided, as there is in this case, that is the way the matter should proceed.

Mr. Lawrence: What about the people of Canada?

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): In this day, sometimes it is the employees who have the advantage of having a mediator appointed and not following the agreement, and sometimes it is the employers. I believe that in both cases we should be ready to say: follow your agreement and we shall see, afterwards, what may be necessary.

Mr. Lawrence: What about the public?

Mr. Stanfield: In view of the fact that the distinguished parliamentary secretary indicated yesterday, I believe, that there was some difference of opinion between Air Canada and the flight attendants, in view of the possibility that there is a difference of opinion here, and recognizing what the minister says about the importance of collective agreements being followed and preserved—

An hon. Member: Do you remember the question, Bob?

Mr. Stanfield: I remember the question, and I am trying to keep in mind, too, the great inconvenience to the travelling public.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1430)

Mr. Stanfield: In view of the importance of the question I am simply asking the minister, not that he circumvent the agreement, whether he is considering some method of mediation in advance of the walkout with a view to bringing the parties together in the event of a substantial difference of opinion about what the agreement means?

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): Mr. Speaker, I saw Mr. Pratte in Montreal. I asked him to do all he could in order to avoid the pilots going on strike tonight. I must underline that it is too easy just to talk about the effect on the public. We adopted those laws and, unless we decide to change them, each time there is a strike in public services there will be inconveniences. This is something which is in the very nature of our bargaining process.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

LAY-OFFS BY AIR CANADA BECAUSE OF STRIKE—
INTERPRETATION OF COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, may I put a question to the Minister of Transport, agreeing entirely [Mr. Stanfield.]

with the statement he made with regard to collective bargaining.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I do not belong to that group of members who support collective bargaining one minute and are against it the next.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Perhaps the hon. member would ask his question.

Mr. Lewis: In view of the fact these difficulties arise from an apparent difference in the interpretation of the collective agreements, will the minister ask Air Canada to stop acting in the way it has with regard to the pilots and others of its employees until the meaning of the agreements has been adjudicated upon through an arbitrator instead of placing its employees at a disadvantage and then requiring them to go to arbitration?

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I think that what the hon. member for York South is saying makes sense.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): The thing is that it happens that on the other side of the House there is one who knows what collective bargaining is.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): The problem is that some of the important unions in Air Canada formally accepted that in such cases, and there is no doubt in the agreements that they accepted, they would be laid off without pay. In what situation will Air Canada be placed if they pay those who are in the higher brackets and do not pay those in the lower brackets? This is what they are now trying to work out. It is quite a complicated problem. This is why I say it is easier to solve it just by a statement referring to the public interest.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, if I could—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. May we have order, please. The hon. member for York South has the floor for the purpose of asking a supplementary question.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, in the same area of work stoppages I wish to ask the Postmaster General whether he can make—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I respectfully suggest to the hon. member that, even though he says the question is in the same general area, it is hardly a supplementary. It may be a related question. The hon. member may wish to ask a