

Adjournment Debate

airline operates during a legal strike with personnel who may not be familiar with the equipment or are overworked.

The Canada Labour Relations Board has made its decision on the matters in dispute between EPA pilots and management. The decision is public knowledge, but in basic terms it finds Eastern Provincial Airways management in breach of the Canada Labour Code and provides for a quick return to work by directing the restoration of seniority rights for pilots.

Let me say that I am not the only Member concerned with the settlement of the Eastern Provincial Airways strike. My colleagues in the Official Opposition, particularly the Hon. Member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forrestall), have discussed the issues and have offered assistance. Members representing the Government, including the Hon. Member for Gander-Twillingate (Mr. Baker) and the Hon. Member for Restigouche (Mr. Harquail), have publicly stated their concerns and sought satisfactory solutions. But the Canada Labour Relations Board has rendered its decision. I sincerely believe that all Members of the House of Commons from Atlantic Canada desire the strike settled and full service restored to the travelling public.

Many of us view with alarm the indication by the management of EPA that it will not abide by the decision of the Canada Labour Relations Board. The President of EPA has stated publicly that he will appeal the Board's decision. Yet Section 122 of the Canada Labour Code indicates clearly that the Board's decision is final and cannot be reviewed or questioned by a court. There is the possibility of an intervention by the Federal Court of Canada, but this recourse is reserved for technical errors and is not an appeal on the merits of the case.

Today in the House of Commons we had an assurance of the Acting Minister of Labour to the effect that the Government expected compliance with the decision of the Canada Labour Relations Board, notwithstanding any reference to the Federal Court. In fact the Acting Minister said in the House today, that these orders of the Canada Labour Relations Board cannot in any way be delayed even if some kind of appeal is put forward by the President of EPA. Those were the words of the Acting Minister, and I take him at his word. I hope the Government will take every action possible to ensure immediate compliance with the decision of the Canada Labour Relations Board so that full service on EPA can be restored.

There are one or two other points which have arisen during the course of this labour dispute at EPA that are of real concern to myself and other Members. One is that the Canadian Transport Commission in the midst of this strike situation approved a merger between EPA and CP Air. Not only did it approve that merger, but apparently it took no offence with the fact that EPA announced the merger the day before, as far as I can determine, it was actually approved. For the CTC to be so insensitive to the rights of the employees involved in the operation by deciding an important issue like that, virtually without reference to the employees involved, is not a proper interpretation of the mandate of the CTC. It was bound to

prolong the labour dispute. It was bound to encourage management to resist settlement of the dispute. I think the Canadian Transport Commission owes Parliament and the public an explanation of its action.

We from Atlantic Canada have always recognized that Eastern Provincial Airways is a community corporation, a corporation which contributes in a very important way to the economy of the Atlantic region. There are over 900 EPA employees in the area of Halifax which I represent. EPA contributes something in the area of \$10 million to the local economy on an annual basis. We all have an interest in the continued success and viability of this air transport business and operation.

• (1815)

I can only repeat that we beg the management of Eastern Provincial Airways to recognize that the time has come for settlement of this dispute. I can virtually state on the basis of my many conversations with the pilots involved in this strike that they are more than willing to go back to work and cooperate, with all the reasonable demands of management.

One concern that should be important to management and the pilots is that the confidence of the public in the operation of the airline is essential to its continued success in the future. Any questions about safety will result in loss of consumer and customer confidence. I warn the management of EPA in a fair-minded way that if they do not sit down with the pilots and reach an immediate settlement of this dispute on the basis already approved by the Canada Labour Relations Board, this may in years to come affect the viability and success of the airline operation.

These are difficult times for all Canadian businesses. I can understand why any company would be concerned with its collective bargaining agreements, but I have every assurance from the persons involved that what is at stake here is that viability of the airlines and the continued interest of the employee in that commercial success for the airline. The Management of EPA have little to fear on the part of all their employees, particularly the pilots, if they commence to bargain in good faith, as the Canada Labour Relations Board has directed, and reach a settlement so that this matter can be put to rest and the airline put back into full operation.

Mr. Douglas Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to reply on behalf of the Minister of Labour (Mr. Caccia) and his Parliamentary Secretary. I should also thank the Hon. Member for Gander-Twillingate (Mr. Baker) who has given me some advice. I know that the Hon. Member for Gander-Twillingate has taken a very deep interest in the welfare of the pilots and the company in the management of this issue.

The Canada Labour Relations Board ruled that EPA violated provisions in the Canadian Labour Code, and stated that EPA had failed to bargain in good faith and to make every reasonable effort to enter into a collective agreement; had unlawfully interfered with the internal affairs of the union; and had negotiated to an impasse provisions of the