

Oral Questions

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, perhaps I can respond to that question. First, I checked into the allegations that were made by my hon. friend yesterday. I am advised that the employee in question is not suspended but is held out of service pending the investigation.

Mr. Benjamin: What is the difference?

Mr. Mazankowski: Held out of service with pay, pending the investigation. Second, Air Canada has no policy that prohibits public contact employees from discussing politics—

Mr. Boudria: Why have the investigation?

Mr. Mazankowski: —politics, religion or any other subject with customers. My understanding is that the investigation is to be completed on Thursday, May 29 and, pending the results of that investigation, any action with respect to suspension or disciplinary action will be taken into account.

I should also say that the Hon. Member charged yesterday that my correspondence group requested the suspension of this particular person.

Mr. Benjamin: I didn't say that.

Mr. Mazankowski: I want to advise the House that I merely received the letter and sent it to Air Canada for a response.

Mr. Benjamin: If there is no policy against the activities of that flight attendant, what is the investigation about? I find it strange that the Minister of Transport answers questions about the behaviour of members of the Prime Minister's staff.

FORWARDING OF LETTERS TO CROWN CORPORATIONS

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Prime Minister. Does he appreciate that Ministers of the Crown cannot be allowed simply to simply forward the whims in personal letters from Tory delegates to Crown corporations?

Mr. Epp (Provencher): You do that every day.

Mr. Benjamin: In the name of fairness and his open Government, will he reverse the damage caused by this action of this Minister—

Mr. Speaker: The Member will appreciate that this is a little long.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I told the Hon. Member yesterday and he knows that our office receives many letters, both complimentary and of a complaint nature, which we send on to Air Canada for a response to the person who inquires. There is nothing abnormal or irregular about that. If it is a New Democrat, a Liberal, or a Conservative, they are all treated the same.

[Translation]

REGIONAL INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION

RATIONALIZATION OF SHIPYARDS IN QUEBEC—GOVERNMENT'S METHOD OF PROCEEDING

Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart (Montreal—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the the Minister of Transport.

During a telephone conversation with a *Globe and Mail* reporter, Versatile Corporation President Saunders said that the only way he might be awarded a contract this spring was to accept the responsibility of rationalizing the Quebec shipyard industry.

Can the Minister explain why the Government would resort to such methods, and tell us whether putting such pressure on company presidents is common practice?

[English]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that my predecessor indicated to Mr. Saunders that he should engage in discussions with other representatives of the shipbuilding industry in the Province of Quebec with a view to rationalizing the shipbuilding industry in that province, as is occurring in the Province of Ontario under the aegis of Mr. Martin and Mr. Leitch, all of whom recognize the difficulties in the shipbuilding industry and the tremendous over-capacity not only in Canada but throughout the world. This is an attempt at an orderly rationalization of an industry in order that its future may be secured.

[Translation]

REQUEST FOR CLARIFICATION

Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart (Montreal—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister for being so frank. Can the Minister explain how he can reconcile Mr. Saunders' statement with his own and that of the Minister of State (Small Businesses) who told Sorel workers last week that the Government had not given a mandate to Mr. Saunders? How can these two answers be reconciled?

● (1500)

[English]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I think what my colleague, the Minister of State for Small Businesses, said was that there was no mandate to shut down any shipbuilding entities in the Province of Quebec. I wish the Hon. Member would stop misleading—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Gauthier: That's not what he said.

Mr. Mazankowski: Maybe it is not deliberate but I wish the Hon. Member would stop that exercise because there is no point in spreading fear and apprehension amongst the workers