

Oral Questions

working together to see that Chatham is not left without any compensation or any alternatives as they are at the moment.

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PUBLIC SERVICE**SUSPENSION OF PUBLIC SERVANT FOR OPPOSING METRIC CONVERSION PROGRAM**

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of National Revenue who will perhaps be aware that this week Neil Fraser, an employee of his department in Kingston, was suspended from work for three days because he publicly spoke out against the policy of metric conversion. In fact he was told that if his protests were repeated he would be dismissed.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Miss MacDonald: The minister will know there is no conflict of interest here because it had nothing to do with the Department of National Revenue. I ask the minister if it is his policy, indeed the policy of the government, that if a civil servant speaks out against any aspect of government policy, he will be dismissed?

Hon. William Rompkey (Minister of National Revenue): Madam Speaker, it is true that an auditor from the Kingston district office was involved in a public demonstration against the metric system. I gather he also wrote to the newspapers about it. He was called in and given a three-day suspension, according to departmental guidelines. He has since appeared on television criticizing the metric system, the Constitution, and bilingualism.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Rompkey: In similar cases, Madam Speaker, the right of the employer to discipline the employee for public statements critical of government programs has been upheld by the courts, as I am sure it will be in this case.

Mr. Mazankowski: So much for the charter of rights.

CIVIL RIGHTS OF PUBLIC SERVANTS

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Madam Speaker, the issue here is freedom of speech.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Miss MacDonald: It is a question of the civil rights a public servant should enjoy, and I would like to direct my supplementary to the President of the Treasury Board, the minister responsible for the public service. I would ask him to give us an assurance that those public service employees who dare speak out against any aspect of government policy, who choose to follow that route, will not be subjected to punitive action by the government, particularly when they speak on a matter not in conflict with their responsibilities in their own departments?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Donald J. Johnston (President of the Treasury Board): Madam Speaker, I am not aware of the facts in this particular case which the hon. member raised initially with my colleague, the Minister of National Revenue, but in my responsibilities as President of the Treasury Board I will discuss the matter with my officials and my colleague.

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● (1450)

MINES AND MINING**LOAN TO PERU FOR COPPER MINING VENTURE**

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): My question is directed to the Minister of State for Mines. Last December the minister was crowing quite proudly about the benefits of a \$250 million loan at 11 per cent to the government of Peru for a copper mining venture. Since that time about 1,500 Canadian copper mining workers have been laid off. In Stewart, British Columbia, about one fifth of the workers at Granduc will be laid off, as well. Since the Canadian sector is paying roughly double the foreign Liberal rate for capital, does the minister believe that this kind of loan to foreign competitors is in the best interest of the Canadian copper mining industry?

Hon. Judy Erola (Minister of State (Mines)): Madam Speaker, the loan to which the hon. member refers affects a copper mine which will not come into production until roughly four or five years down the road, by which time we hope the copper situation will have improved and that the prices will have risen considerably. The fact is that that loan produces jobs in Canada immediately, within the next year, and that is what is important, given the current economic situation.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

CREATION OF JOBS IN CANADA

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Madam Speaker, I find it passing strange that if the mine will not go into operation for four or five years, it will immediately create jobs in Canada. I contacted the minister's office which informed me that it is opposed to this deal. I wonder whether the minister would comment on that.

Since roughly 4,000 jobs have been lost in the copper industry and supply sector since this December announcement, I wonder if the minister will be making any money available at 11 per cent to the Canadian copper industry. Despite repeated inquiries directed to her office, to the EDC, and to the company S & C in Montreal, I have not been able to find evidence of one job which will be created in Canada. I challenge the minister to stand up in this House to tell us just one job which will be created as a result of the loan of \$250 million at 11 per cent.