

Oral Questions

to do so by appearing before the parliamentary committee. I noticed his absence.

As for the attitude of a union member who is at the same time employed by the department, the reason he was suspended is that he directly criticized high officers in general about not only departmental administration but also departmental policy. The officials of my department felt that he had gone beyond all limits.

[English]

ALLEGED THREAT BY DEPARTMENT OF SUPPLY AND SERVICES TO DISCIPLINE UNION LEADERS WHO CRITICIZE WORKING CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYEES

Mr. Stuart Leggatt (New Westminster): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question concerns the fact that Mr. Stewart, on repeated occasions according to this article, had requested meetings with the minister asking that an informal committee be set up composed of labour and management in order to discuss the problems he raised in the article. The problem is that the minister and his staff left no alternative to Mr. Stewart. Is it to be the policy of this minister that in his department union leaders will be disciplined—and I might say that the suspension notice contains a threat of further discipline—if they have the temerity to criticize the working conditions within the minister's department which directly affect their workers and particularly the potential loss of their jobs through mismanagement? Will the minister advise the House if that is to be the future policy of his department?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Pierre Goyer (Minister of Supply and Services): Mr. Speaker, it is the absolute responsibility of any union representative to try and improve the working conditions of union members. This is a basic responsibility which I fully respect within my department. As a matter of fact, there were but a few grievances which have been settled through the normal process. I have asked Mr. Stewart to meet with my two deputy ministers, which he did. Later, he sent me a letter advising me how satisfied he was with the result of this meeting. Employer-employee relations are therefore excellent. Now, I know that Mr. Stewart is working keeping in mind a forthcoming election. Perhaps all he needs is a little publicity.

[English]

REASON FOR ALLEGED REFUSAL OF MINISTER TO MEET MR. STEWART TO ESTABLISH INFORMAL WORKING COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT AND LABOUR

Mr. Stuart Leggatt (New Westminster): By the way, Mr. Speaker, I am not a member of that particular committee, so it is not surprising I have not attended the deliberations.

My final supplementary is as follows. In view of the legitimate concern that everyone has about the minister's department, how is it that the minister has in fact refused—I will have to repeat the question I asked originally—to meet with Mr. Stewart and to set up an informal working committee so that working conditions can be worked out with the minister? I would like the minister's response to that because surely that is one of the most

[Mr. Goyer.]

serious charges that Mr. Stewart makes in the article in the *Ottawa Citizen*.

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Pierre Goyer (Minister of Supply and Services): Mr. Speaker, first I accept the criticism relating to the policies of my department voiced by my colleagues in the House and Canadians in general. That is the way it should be. However, I do not think it proper that employees of my department publicly criticize departmental policies. That is the role of members of this House or taxpayers. Otherwise, you have anarchy in a department. I want to make it quite clear that if the hon. member has anything to say against the department, he has every opportunity to do so, and let him do so. As to labour relations within my department, the hon. member fails to understand what I said. There was a productive meeting between Mr. Stewart and the two deputy ministers and the problems were entirely solved in that area. However, when a meeting with the minister is necessary, I am available not only to union officials, but to any employee in my department.

[English]

SUSPENSION OF MR. STEWART—SUGGESTED REFERENCE OF ALLEGATIONS TO PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, in view of the minister's statement a few moments ago that he is prepared to accept criticism—and I am sure he would not want the precipitous action of his deputy minister to leave the impression that there was in fact something amiss in his department as described by Mr. Stewart—would the minister be now prepared to agree to have the Stewart allegations submitted to the Public Accounts Committee for review and report and to have a report made to this House with respect to this matter, if things are as good in his department as the minister says?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Pierre Goyer (Minister of Supply and Services): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member refuses to do his own homework when I appear before a committee and ask the necessary questions, or make use of the oral questions period in the House, or the order paper for that matter, I think he refuses to carry out his duties.

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[English]

FINANCE

ALLEGATION MINISTER TOLD BRITISH COLUMBIA FOREST INDUSTRIES TO TAKE HARD LINE ON WAGE NEGOTIATIONS—MINISTER'S POSITION

Mr. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Finance. In view of reports which emanated yesterday from the British Columbia Federation of Labour that the management of the largest forest companies in B.C. were deliberately taking a hard line on wages as a result of an invitation to do so by the Minister of Finance in the conversations held with them during the consensus talks, and in view of the very grave effect that particular allegation has in terms of