

Inquiries of the Ministry

although I can imagine, to judge by the quality of the questions he has asked in the past month, that it was not really that important.

Some hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Hees: Bryce, you have struck out again. You are becoming a fanning fool.

Mr. Mark Rose (Fraser Valley West): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Since the mandatory 12-hour overtime provision violates enlightened employment practices, does the minister not feel that he, personally, or members of his department could assist in overcoming what is probably the major obstacle preventing a settlement?

Mr. Mackasey: Mr. Speaker, that particular matter was settled on my last trip to Vancouver. Many of these rather unenlightened work practices have been eliminated. Quite naturally the longshoremen were afraid that they could be asked to work for 84 hours a week, which in theory was possible. That matter has been rectified. It is now a question of identifying how the various kinds of employees, casual, semi-casual and permanent, will be affected on the waterfront by the attempted change in the working rules, because management insists on certain rights. Once we can pinpoint this effect and assure the longshoremen that the collective agreement will not reduce their work force so drastically, I think we shall have gone a long way to reversing present opinions in the union. We are working to this end now.

Mr. Lewis: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I hope the minister made a slip of the tongue. He talked about assuring the longshoremen about the purpose of the legislation. I hope he meant to say "collective agreement".

Mr. Mackasey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing the hon. member to make that correction, because I have not as yet contemplated legislation. That would be a cabinet decision and I have not made any particular recommendations to my colleagues. When the moment of truth comes we must worry about the economy of the country and about that part of the country serviced by this port. The responsibility here must be borne by the employers and employees as well.

[Mr. Mackasey.]

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina East): May I ask the minister whether he made a statement in public prior to the latest balloting by the membership of the union to the effect that if the agreement was not ratified, legislation would be imposed, and if he did make such a statement, does he not consider that it was a threat to the membership?

Mr. Mackasey: I must admit I threatened all sides, including myself. I tried seduction, I tried blackmail, I tried every weapon at the disposal of a Minister of Labour to get an agreement. What I had not counted on was the membership rejecting an agreement which had been unanimously accepted by the negotiating team. That was something which had not been expected, and it is a problem which, in the final analysis, the unions themselves will have to solve—what happens to unions, to seven different locals, when they repudiate what is done in their name by a negotiating team and an executive committee in pursuance of their responsibilities. This is something which the unions themselves will have to work out.

THE AUDITOR GENERAL

SUGGESTED REDUCTION OF STAFF

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Has-tings): I have a question to direct to the President of the Treasury Board. Has the hon. gentleman looked into the directive from the Treasury Board that the Auditor General reduce his staff ceiling to 239?

Hon. C. M. Drury (President of the Treasury Board): Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Hees: We will get to it. Is the minister reviewing that directive in the light of the statement by the Auditor General that he cannot accept it because—I quote his words—"if the government is going to determine of itself the size and quality of the staff of the Auditor General then they can determine and limit the scope and effectiveness of his work."

Mr. Drury: The correspondence to which the hon. gentleman referred has been reviewed. The assumption was made that the Auditor General would wish to be a full participant in the government's program of restraint upon staff expansion in the current year. Consequently, it was proposed to him that his ceiling might well be limited in the same way as those of other government