

Board to the deputy ministers who are responsible in each department across the government. These departments, in some cases, have codes of conduct. In fact I have one with me today, which is quite an elaborate code of conduct, of the Department of Employment and Immigration, and which has been in existence for many years. I understand, in fact, it was in existence while the opposition briefly formed the government in 1979 and early 1980.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): We never had any problems like that, that I recall.

POSITIONS TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): I, too, have copies of those codes of conduct of which the minister speaks. However, I notice that he did not answer any of the questions I asked as to whether or not they are negotiated with the public service unions or whether they are just brought in for convenience at the time a minister thinks they can apply. For example, last November thousands of Canadians, including many public servants, demonstrated on Parliament Hill against the government's policy of high interest rates, unemployment, and mortgage costs. They carried placards and banners, and they made verbal protests. However, they were not suspended or fired. They were allowed to express their freedom of speech.

What is the difference in the case of Mr. Fraser, who did exactly the same thing? In this case, is the government being big and bold, and able to use bully boy, ruthless tactics, moving against a single individual, a single voice, using punitive action against him, when it took no action last autumn? What is the difference in Mr. Fraser's case?

Hon. Donald J. Johnston (President of the Treasury Board): Madam Speaker, the issue of conduct of any employee is a matter of judgment.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Johnston: It is clearly a matter of judgment. Perhaps that is not something with which the hon. member is familiar. However, it is a matter of judgment between employers and employees in any situation. It is generally recognized that public servants in any jurisdiction are not there to fan the flames of controversy on issues which are controversial at any particular period of time. But, generally speaking, the matter is not a black and white one. It is specifically provided in these codes of conduct, for example, that there is no problem with respect to matters of collective bargaining. I therefore suggest to the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands that she is trying to fan this particular issue entirely out of perspective.

Miss MacDonald: Do not worry; the whole country is.

Mr. Johnston: Mr. Fraser has every right to embark upon the avenues of appeal which are available to him. I understand he is doing so.

Oral Question

METRIC CONVERSION

COMMENTS MADE BY UNITED STATES AMBASSADOR

Mr. Bill Domm (Peterborough): Madam Speaker, the unemployed civil servant, Neil Fraser, said Canadians should continue to exercise their freedom of choice and that mandatory imposition of metric systems assaulted this freedom. For speaking this truth, he was fired. Last Friday it was reported that the United States ambassador to Canada thinks that the mandatory imposition of metric is rubbish, and predicted that it would be many years, if ever, before the United States switches, and that it might be detrimental to trade between our two nations.

Therefore I would like to ask the Secretary of State for External Affairs if he intends to recommend that Neil Fraser be reinstated for telling the truth, or does he intend to ask Washington to recall its ambassador for presuming to tell the truth to Canadians about the metric system, as Neil Fraser did? He lost his job.

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, I believe that the comments of the American ambassador, to which the hon. member refers, were made in his personal capacity. Certainly we have received no such representation from Washington.

Mr. Clark: What about Fraser?

Mr. Domm: Madam Speaker, I say to the minister that Neil Fraser's comments were made in the privacy of a public meeting, not while carrying out his duties as a member of the tax department.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Domm: Now the civil servants know where they can speak.

ORDER MAKING IMPERIAL MEASUREMENT ILLEGAL

Mr. Bill Domm (Peterborough): I would like to ask a question of the minister responsible for the Metric Commission. The white paper on metric imposition states that because of the close ties between Canada and the United States in science, technology, industry and commerce, each country has a special interest in the course likely to be followed by the other in respect of metric conversion. Those words were written by the former minister of industry, trade and commerce who is sitting beside the minister in this House. I would like to ask the minister why this government has reverted to an order in council making imperial measurement illegal without full parliamentary discussion in this House of Commons. Why did the minister do that? Why did the minister not implement the white paper, which Mr. Fraser was fired for referring to as the document which brought about the implementation of metric in Canada?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!