

*The Budget—Mr. Pelletier*

absolutely unacceptable. The federal relocation proposal brought much hope for young people especially for graduates of our two universities and our two junior colleges because there is so much unemployment among young people. Everybody agrees that the project is very important for our area, for economic development of course, but also for social and cultural development.

I would now like to say a word about this proposed relocation. Since the beginning, that is 1974, among the basic principles set by the federal government at that time there is one that the federal government has particularly emphasized and still emphasizes. This principle is as follows and I quote:

● (2212)

The transfer of any administrative unit of the federal public service implying a considerable number of an official linguistic minority will only be made when it has been ascertained through a permanent agreement with the host province that the children of federal civil servants will have the opportunity to be educated in the official language that they usually speak.

It is only after long and hard negotiations with public service officials and the provinces that the agreement was reached to abide fully by this principle when federal decentralization or relocation projects would take place within their boundaries. None of the provinces having accepted the federal government decentralization program could back out of this basic principle. When the Matane, Shawinigan and Jonquière programs were announced and implemented in Quebec—since all the other provinces had agreed on decentralization—it decided to stand by this fundamental principle of the Federal government. And when the second stage of the federal relocation program was announced in the autumn of 1977, three other cities in Quebec had been chosen and the same 1974 principles to which provinces had agreed from the outset were still included in the conditions set by the federal government. This requirement of free choice for the language of instruction has not been changed despite the changes in provincial governments since 1974. It has not been easy to obtain such linguistic guarantees from other Canadian provinces, in which francophones represent less than 5 per cent of the population in certain cases. As far as Sherbrooke is concerned, all the other conditions set by the federal government do not seem to be causing any problem to the relocation project.

At least three ministers of the Quebec government came to Sherbrooke after the announcement of October 3, 1977. One said that the provincial government "would never go down on its knees before the federal government", a second said that the federal project was "stillborn", and finally, Minister Camille Laurier said in his press conference of March 17, 1978, and I quote:

This is why we cannot accept the statement by the federal government that . . . "any relocation of an administrative unit of the federal public service involving a significant group of an official language minority will occur only when we are assured, by a permanent agreement with the host province, that the children of federal government employees will be taught in the official language that they usually use."

[Mr. Pelletier.]

Mr. Laurin then said:

It is up to the provinces to sign mutual agreements to ensure fair and desirable reciprocity because they alone are constitutionally empowered to do so. By trying to assume the right to sign a permanent agreement in this regard with a province, the federal government is once more invading the jurisdiction of the provinces and reveals its desire for centralization.

During the same press conference, Minister Laurin also said:

First, the Quebec government recognizes the economic advantages that the establishment of a service including 750 employees would have for the Sherbrooke area; and second, the government was willing to offer its full co-operation for the implementation of this project while scrupulously respecting Quebec laws.

He reminded us in this regard that Act 101 provides for a renewable authorization of temporary residence for a period of three years and that it would therefore be normal that a period of six years be provided for employees moving to Sherbrooke. This section of the French language charter—section 85—refers to temporary stay in Quebec and then suggests that those six years should remove all anxiety from the mind of public servants who might be transferred eventually. On that matter, Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that the proposed relocation will not be for three years or six years but it will be permanent. Therefore the federal public servants who will be transferred to Sherbrooke will not be in our province on a temporary basis, but most of them will settle permanently in Sherbrooke with their family. That is the substance of the problem. The federal government, which does not have one law for the rich and another for the poor, has a principle which applies to all regions of Canada since 1974, including Quebec which is still part of Canada. On the other hand, that provision of the French language charter would not allow Canadian citizens from outside Quebec who would take up permanent residence in Sherbrooke to send their children over six years of age to the school of their choice. On several occasions, the federal government has stated that it could not accept that view of the Quebec government.

In the House last spring I asked the following questions to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien):

In connection with the Quebec government proposal to allow the federal public servants who would settle in Sherbrooke a six year maximum during which they could send their children to English schools would the minister be prepared to discuss whether, under the 101 legislation, the cartographers who expect to be moved to Sherbrooke might enjoy the linguistic privileges of the military?

And the minister answered:

Mr. Speaker, I would surely be interested in discussing such a proposal with the Quebec government. I feel it would be very desirable to have a certain number of public servants transferred to Sherbrooke as provided in the decentralization plan.

When it was advised of this reply made by the Minister of Finance, the Quebec government indicated that it could not accept this proposal. Because of the problems resulting from the conflicting principles and positions put forward by both governments, several independent local organizations tried to