

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, September 20, 1973

The House met at 2 p.m.

[English]

PRIVILEGE

MR. HALES—ALLEGED INCORRECT INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY MINISTER RESPECTING LOCAL INITIATIVES PROGRAM

Mr. A. D. Hales (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege, notice of which I have given Your Honour, affecting not only myself but every member of the House. My question of privilege deals with misleading, incorrect and false information supplied by the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Andras) in regard to the Local Initiatives Program.

In a letter dated August 23 the minister wrote to all members of parliament setting out the liaison procedure for the program. The letter states that constituency advisory groups will be established to recommend projects to the minister. On page 2 of his letter there is the following statement:

Members may nominate as many people as they like in each category in order of priority, from which I—

Meaning the minister.

—shall select the members of the constituency advisory group... My decision will be final.

In other words, the minister says that he will make the final selection.

In the yellow document that is handed out by the Manpower offices to those who apply for LIP grants it is stated, on page 1, paragraph (b):

... Members of parliament are invited to set up Constituency Advisory Groups... In cases where members of parliament do not wish to set up a Constituency Advisory Group, the Department of Manpower and Immigration will carry out the selection function in consultation with the local member of parliament.

The fact is that the minister has the final selection of the members of these groups. My point of privilege is that this pamphlet, "Information for Applicants", which is issued in the ridings, gives a false impression in that the people in the ridings and the press are led to understand that the local member of parliament chooses the members of the advisory committee as outlined in this circular.

The minister and his department have therefore misled the public by stating the fact that members of parliament have the right to choose and set up the advisory committees whereas in fact they do not have this right. They can only suggest names. The minister selects the members and his decision is final. I suggest, Your Honour, that by this false information supplied to applicants for LIP grants members of parliament are being held responsible not only for the formation of the constituency advisory groups but also, if grants are turned down, it will appear that it is the local member of parliament and his advisory group

who have denied certain requests for grants whereas in fact it will be the minister, on the recommendation of the advisory groups which he sets up, who will refuse LIP grants.

I raise this question, Sir, because it affects not only myself but all members on both sides of the House. If you find that I have a prima facie case of breach of privilege I will move, seconded by the hon. member for Fraser Valley East (Mr. Patterson):

That all correspondence, circulars and pamphlets pertaining to this matter be referred to the Committee on Privileges and Elections for study and report.

Mr. Speaker: The grievance raised by the hon. member for Wellington is one which was raised before in the House, last week, I believe, by the hon. member for Yukon when he very forcefully objected to or took issue with the statement of the minister. The matter was considered at that time. I suggest to the hon. member that there is not a prima facie case of privilege. He proposes a motion. I suggest to him that this is a substantive motion and not a privileged motion. In the circumstances I respectfully suggest to the hon. member that this is not the kind of matter that the House should consider at this time.

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

RECOGNITION OF GROUPS OF VISITORS IN GALLERIES— RULING BY MR. SPEAKER

Mr. Steven E. Paproski (Edmonton Centre): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I beg your indulgence but today is an historic day for this chamber as we have here 42 senior citizens from Edmonton Centre who are visiting parliament. I feel that when people travel 2,400 miles just to see the way parliament operates—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I appreciate the position of the hon. member for Edmonton Centre, who at this time wants to bring to the attention of the House the presence of very distinguished citizens from his constituency. I am sure all members are pleased to see them here, but at the same time I suggest to the hon. member it is extremely bad practice to do what he is attempting to do at this time. Every day there are distinguished visitors in the members' gallery and in my gallery, visitors from my constituency and other members' constituencies, but if we were to embark on a practice of recognizing visits by senior citizens, junior citizens, or any other groups visiting the House of Commons we might spend most of our day bringing to the attention of the House the presence in the galleries of our distinguished constituents. After what I heard yesterday during the question period that might be an improvement—