

*Inquiries of the Ministry***PUBLIC SERVICE****PATRONAGE—STATEMENT ON GOVERNMENT POSITION**

On the orders of the day:

Hon. Noel Dorion (Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the hon. member for Port Arthur, referring to a newspaper article about patronage in appointments which, in part, quoted certain views of the chairman of the Civil Service Commission of Canada, inquired whether the federal government has revised its views along what he called the same line.

It is quite clear that Mr. Hughes was expressing a personal comment respecting an area of employment over which the federal government has no control, that is appointments to provincial positions which are outside the jurisdiction of the provincial civil service commissions.

In reply to the hon. member's question I would say that the government's views with respect to the federal civil service have been expressed from time to time, notably in the Civil Service Act passed by parliament within the past 12 months, in what was said in the debates on that bill, and in the regulations made under that act two or three weeks ago. These views have not been revised along any such line as the hon. member's question implies.

PUBLIC BUILDINGS**BEAUCEVILLE, QUE.—RECOVERY OF ALLEGED OVERPAYMENT**

On the orders of the day:

Hon. Lionel Chevrier (Laurier): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Public Works. What steps is he taking to recover the \$8,000 which was overpaid to a supporter of the Union Nationale in connection with the Beauceville post office as alleged by the member for Beauce?

Hon. D. J. Walker (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, seeing that this is the swan song of the hon. member for Laurier, the pseudo leader from Quebec, who has never been anything else, may I say to him that in the fall we will welcome his enthusiastic co-operation in the public accounts committee to fully investigate this alleged matter, if he is re-elected; and if he is not we might employ him as special counsel to help him out.

Mr. Chevrier: I asked the minister a question and he made a speech. I put this question to the minister, since he has refused to answer my first question. Why did the minister not carry out his undertaking to submit the allegations of the hon.

[Mr. Flynn.]

member for Beauce to the public accounts committee promptly? Having suggested this, he then refused to let the matter go to the public accounts committee.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It seems to me this is reviving a matter we dealt with the other day.

Mr. Chevrier: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister not answer my question as to what steps he as Minister of Public Works is taking to recover that amount?

Mr. Walker: Mr. Speaker, for many, many months I have wanted to ask the hon. member—

Mr. Chevrier: Answer the question.

Mr. Walker:—why the Welland canal, which he predicted would cost \$1.3 million, cost \$27 million.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Walker: To deal with the question of the Beauceville post office—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chevrier: On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker, the minister asked me a question and I think he is entitled to a reply.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Questions are in the reverse direction at this stage of the day. If the hon. member has been misquoted or if there is a matter of explanation that arises out of the comment of the minister I will give him the floor—

Mr. Chevrier: It does.

Mr. Speaker:—but not to continue a debate.

Mr. Chevrier: No, but the hon. member wants to know why the Welland canal cost \$27 million. The government ought to be able to give the answer, because they supported it and the Minister of Finance approved that expenditure.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member will appreciate that this is not the time to debate the construction of the Welland canal, or the cost of construction.

Mr. Chevrier: I agree, Mr. Speaker; your ruling is quite correct.

Some hon. Members: Sit down, then.

Mr. Chevrier: But the statement I wanted to make was that the original Welland canal which was estimated to cost \$50 million actually cost \$132 million when a former Tory government was in office.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. member accepts my ruling, I would be glad if he would abide by it.