

all. That is how we did it, sir. I have been a civil servant for 30 years.

Senator Phillips: I fully respect your position as a civil servant, sir. But there was no specific direction given to you as to why it had to be that date, or why it could not have been two weeks later or a month later?

Mr. Bergevin: No, sir.

Senator Phillips: Because it is retroactive to January 1.

Mr. Bergevin: I was not given any date, sir. I was asked, "When can you get those cheques out?" And that was our answer—May 19.

Senator Phillips: But no explanation was ever given to you as to why you could not have done the same thing in March?

The Chairman: Well, I think that is beyond the responsibility of the witness at this time. Evidently it is a political decision. A political decision, in so far as the House of Commons is concerned, has been taken unanimously by the house, and I do not think that the witness has really to answer that question. What he has been asked was what date was necessary in order to get the cheques out for June 1.

Senator Phillips: You do not have to lecture me on that position.

The Chairman: I am not lecturing you.

Senator Phillips: I know just as well as you how it works.

The Chairman: I have too great respect for you to lecture you.

Senator Langlois: This was asked on May 9, was it?

Mr. Bergevin: Sure, after the budget.

Senator Martin: And that was the first intimation you had?

Mr. Bergevin: Yes.

Senator Martin: Do you know of any other way by which you could accelerate the procedure?

Mr. Bergevin: We were not given any intimation of what date we should come up with. We went through the mechanical means described by Mr. Yeomans. If we do not have the legislation by May 19 we cannot meet the deadline.

Senator Martin: That is your final decision?

Mr. Bergevin: Yes.

Senator Carter: Mr. Chairman, I have some general questions on the legislation which have nothing to do with this particular aspect. May I proceed?

The Chairman: Do you have any other questions on the time element, Senator Phillips?

Senator Phillips: If I may, I will just ask one more, and we can finish the time aspect and be through with it, Mr. Chairman.

After the motion in the other place, which I referred to in my remarks this evening, was there any directive that went to the witnesses to prepare a date? Or were any questionnaires sent round in that seven-week period between that Conservative motion in the House of Commons, to which I referred, and the budget? As public servants did you receive any directives asking you to give a date on which the cheques would be mailed out? cheques would be mailed out?

The Chairman: First of all, I am quite sure that our witnesses are free to answer that question if they wish. But I must warn you that this is a privileged question dealing with the relationship between a minister and civil servants.

Senator Phillips: May I just ask the witnesses whether they would answer the question which you have ruled as a privileged question?

The Chairman: If they wish to answer the question they are free to do so within that limitation.

Senator Phillips: Yes, I accept that Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Willard: Mr. Chairman, I am not sure what the question is exactly. I would like to have it framed again.

Senator Phillips: On a date previous to the budget perhaps seven weeks previous, there was a motion in the House of Commons by the official Opposition to produce a result somewhat similar to what you have indicated. I will not go into any partisanship here. I think it is better that way. However, did you receive any instructions after that to begin preparing a program of this nature?

The Chairman: As a result of the motion produced by the Opposition?

Senator Phillips: I did not say that, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Langlois: Perhaps as a consequence.

Senator Phillips: It may have been a consequence or it may have been a coincidence.

The Chairman: I am just trying to help you phrase your question—perhaps in French, if you wish.

Senator Phillips: And I am endeavouring to co-operate with you by saying it could be a coincidence or a consequence. Is that fair enough?

The Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Willard: Mr. Chairman, there was no relationship between that particular motion which has been referred to in the house and what came out in the Minister of Finance budget. Over the past year or so we have from time to time prepared various cost estimates for different programs for the minister. It is normal for our research division to do this on a regular basis. The minister has these cost estimates. However, what the Department of Finance did, or what the Minister of Finance did in his budget was a matter between himself and his colleagues.

The Chairman: Do you have any further questions Senator Phillips?