

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, November 28, 1974

The House met at 2 p.m.

[English]

PRIVILEGE

MR. COSSITT—ALLEGEDLY MISLEADING STATEMENTS OF MINISTER ON APPROVAL OF LOCAL INITIATIVES PROJECTS

Mr. Tom Cossitt (Leeds): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege which affects the rights and privileges of all members since it may involve seriously misleading and inaccurate information being furnished to the House by a minister.

On October 23, as shown on page 647 of *Hansard*, I asked a question of the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Andras) on the subject of the Local Initiatives Program grants, namely as to why constituencies represented by Liberals received approximately \$15 million more than constituencies represented by Conservatives. Since it is pertinent to my question of privilege I will read the minister's reply:

● (1410)

Mr. Speaker, it was based on the worthiness of applications by the sponsors in the various areas of Canada, coupled with the degree of unemployment and the formula which I enunciated in this House on several occasions.

In a supplementary question I asked the minister whether he could assure the House that political considerations were not involved in such grants and he replied, as shown in *Hansard*:

Most certainly, Mr. Speaker.

The information thus given by the minister to the effect that the Local Initiatives Program is completely outside politics has consistently been the contention made by the government to hon. members of this House.

Copies of documents which I am prepared to table have come into my possession indicating that the minister and the government have seriously misled the House and that the awarding of LIP grants has not always been done on the basis outlined to the House by the minister but, instead, often on the basis of political considerations.

To clearly establish my case of privilege I refer briefly to certain of these documents as follows: One, a memorandum dated January 30, 1973 to D. C. Trehearne, at the time director of programs of LIP, from the minister's office, signed by R. J. Gairns, headed "LIP Applications—MP Priorities", and seeming to order on behalf of the minister's office that LIP applications specifically listed in the memorandum be approved in constituencies represented by 10 specifically named Liberal members of parliament and one specifically named New Democratic member of parliament.

The second document is dated January 25, 1973, headed "Confidential" and "Memorandum to the Minister", signed

by J. M. DesRoches, then deputy minister of manpower, which establishes that the country was divided into regions with certain Liberal Cabinet ministers having veto power over LIP applications in such regions as illustrated by these words on page 2 of the memorandum: "No project is approved without concurrence of the regional minister".

The third document is a letter to the minister of manpower dated November 30, 1972, signed by the then Minister of the Environment, Jack Davis, stating:

As the minister with a responsibility to review these projects for British Columbia, I ask that no project be given final approval until clearance has been obtained from this office.

The fourth document is a letter in reply to the Minister of the Environment dated December 6, 1972, signed by Robert K. Andras, and containing this significant statement in the last paragraph:

Certainly my office will make every effort to ensure you are properly consulted on LIP projects in British Columbia . . .

I am also prepared to table a memorandum with attachment dated December 8, 1972 signed by R.J. Gairns, head of the LIP special information group and addressed to Dan Coates, executive assistant to the minister, establishing further the existence of politics in the LIP program; and finally, a memorandum to the minister dated December 29, 1972, establishing what appears to be a connection with the LIP special information group and those who were considered to have a political interest in LIP.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I believe these documents clearly illustrate that the minister and the government may have seriously misinformed and misled this House, and if in your judgment I have a legitimate case of privilege I would move, seconded by the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. McKenzie):

That the matter be referred forthwith to the Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have grave reservations about the validity of the question of privilege, which I will develop momentarily if necessary. I do not like to receive representations on matters of this sort from only one side of the House, and if the minister wishes to make an intervention on the matter I will hear him.

The hon. member was good enough to give the Chair notice, as is required, of his intention to raise a question of privilege. In addition the hon. member gave the Chair, only recently, a copy of his notes to be used in the presentation of the question of privilege, which was of great assistance to an understanding of the detailed nature of this grievance. Again I use the word "grievance" as opposed to "question of privilege", because it is evident from the remarks of the hon. member that what he has is a dispute as to the quality of the reply of the minister in the House, and a dispute as to the accuracy of the information