

welcome assurance but I hope the minister will be able to tell us in the near future what departments are involved in the interest of national unity and in the genuine interests of the extension of Francophone participation in the Public Service.

• (2:20 p.m.)

**Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands):** Mr. Speaker, I think no one will quarrel with the minister's statement that it is desirable to make the Public Service progressively more representative of the two major linguistic communities of Canada. Nor can anyone quarrel with the statement that the government wants to assure equality of opportunity in the Public Service. Nevertheless, neither the statement the minister made today nor the statements he has made previously have cleared up a number of very important questions. On January 25 the minister's office issued a press release, a copy of which I have in my hand. It begins by saying:

Treasury Board President, Honourable C. M. Drury, stated that recent press stories purporting to reveal a secret government fund of \$2 million for special hiring of Francophones for the Public Service have been seriously misleading.

The statement goes on to say:

It is understood the government expects to recruit some 1,250 post-secondary graduates during 1971 and these Francophone positions would be part of that total if the departmental proposals were approved.

"So far as the \$2 million is concerned", the Minister said, "this has not been allocated to any specific program..."

The question which arises in my mind is, if the government has in mind hiring 1,250 post-graduate students in 1971, why would Francophone graduates be treated any differently from the others? It seems to me that there should be no difficulty in the government advertising for 1,250 positions and stipulating that 276, or whatever number the government feels is a fair percentage of the applicants, must be Francophones, and that the other merit qualifications will apply to all positions, whether the persons concerned are Anglophones or Francophones. Why is it not possible to deal with all graduates on the same basis while at the same time specifying those who must have French as their mother tongue. I find it very difficult to understand this difference in treatment and I think the public will find it very difficult to understand.

We are not opposed to having a fair percentage of Francophones in the Public Service. What we are anxious about is to guarantee that the merit system will continue to apply.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Douglas:** The minister has not dealt with that point at all. Will the only qualifying criterion for these 276 be that French is their mother tongue?

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Douglas:** If they are appointed to positions when they apply for these jobs, will they be required to go through the Public Service in the usual way if these jobs become vacant? In other words, I think the House and the country want an assurance from the minister that the merit principles laid down in the Public Service Act are

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not being bypassed in some way. When the government picks out 276 and provides for them under the contingency vote, while the balance of the 1,250 university graduates are to be hired through departments, naturally, there is some concern whether or not the merit principle is being preserved. I hope the minister will seek the earliest occasion possible to make a statement telling us how the merit principle is going to be preserved.

From what I can gather from press reports, another reason for misunderstanding is the fact that the Public Service Alliance have not been consulted about this matter. If they have been consulted more recently, I hope the minister will inform us. Those who are concerned about the security of the positions of those who are in the Public Service, those who are concerned about maintaining the merit system, ought to be allowed to discuss this matter with the government so they can be assured that what the government is doing is simply guaranteeing that there will be a reasonable percentage of French-speaking persons in the Public Service and that in so doing the government is not in any way abusing or bypassing the merit system which all of us want to see preserved.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

**Mr. René Matte (Champlain):** Mr. Speaker, the partial achievement of the basic goal to assure equality of opportunity in the public service for both French and English speaking Canadians would make us feel very elated if in so doing, we could at least achieve the true equality that all Quebecers long for.

Mr. Speaker, the remarks that we have just heard from the leaders of the Progressive Conservative and New Democratic Parties leave us wondering as to the possibilities of reaching, in a near future, this equality hoped for by all French Canadians. We are so far from this hoped for equality that this timid effort looks like a revolution to some of our colleagues, while to us, from Quebec, this is but a first step toward the establishment of a beginning of justice.

Mr. Speaker, I do say, a first step and a very timid one, particularly when we read the minister's statement that the \$2 million earmarked for the purpose will be distributed to only ten departments. Does this mean that the French Canadians have no interest whatsoever in the other departments which have submitted projects to extend certain programs and that those who have not submitted a project are not serving French Canadians? I would be inclined to think about that. Now we can see how very timid and weak this step is.

How can anyone take exception, how can the majority of this country, which should represent the opposition, talk about being unfair towards Anglophones?

A little further, it is said:

—would contribute to the realization of programme objectives and will involve positions in areas of the Public Service where French is normally used.

In other words, wherever there are crying injustices, wherever French is not used, nothing will be improved