

Oral Questions

about what seems on its face to be a rather unfair and paranoid course of action, that is, the circulation of a list which yesterday the government was saying did not exist?

Hon. Francis Fox (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to make one general remark. In view of the fact that this matter has been bandied back and forth across the floor of this House, and in view of the fact that a number of references have been made to a blacklist, as far as the blacklist is concerned, as that word is normally understood, there is no such thing in existence at the moment, nor can I determine that any such "blacklist" existed in the past.

An examination of the files of my department for the period mentioned by the hon. member yesterday does indicate that there was concern at that time that some government employees might be deliberately releasing government classified information without authorization. Names of those employees were given to the minister of the departments and agencies concerned—

An hon. Member: That is blacklist.

Mr. Fox:—and they were advised by the solicitor general at the time that steps should be taken to ensure that these government employees be fully advised and briefed as to their responsibilities for ensuring the security of classified government information. It was, of course, from that point on the responsibility of each government department to use its own judgment on these recommendations since security matters are a governmental responsibility.

I should like to add that this information was transmitted with the utmost discretion in order that it would not be harmful to the reputation of those involved.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

BASIS ON WHICH ALLEGED BLACKLIST COMPILED

Mr. Elmer M. MacKay (Central Nova): This extra-parliamentary opposition list is the only way I have heard it referred to in this House. I want to ask the minister whether, so far as this government is concerned, a difference of opinion, of philosophy or of value systems constitutes grounds for discrimination by this government in the circulation of such a list by this government, which used to call for a just society, and whether or not we could get some information about the justification, the basis and the input of those who compiled the list. Who is ultimately responsible for the circulation of this list, was it the then solicitor general?

● (1440)

Hon. Francis Fox (Solicitor General): In answer to the first part of the question with regard to discrimination against people not fully sharing the views of this government, of course, no such list whatsoever was compiled on that basis. The list that would have been compiled to which the hon. member refers was based on the vital information to which I

[Mr. MacKay.]

referred in the first part of my answer to the hon. member's first question.

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MANPOWER

POSSIBILITY OF QUEBEC ABROGATING TRAINING AND MOBILITY AGREEMENTS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my question to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration. In the knowledge that he has expressed his regrets regarding the scrapping by the minister of immigration in the province of Quebec of federal English language courses for immigrants at immigration centres and that he intends to meet that minister in order to determine what is happening and where he intends to go, and in the knowledge that there are other programs under the minister's jurisdiction dealing with manpower, such as assessment agreements, mobility agreements and adult occupational training grants, which also call for the implementation of agreements by the federal government and in particular at this time by the province of Quebec, has the minister received any indication from his counterpart in the province of Quebec as to the provincial government's intentions with respect to these agreements, keeping in mind that these agreements are based on equality of opportunity?

Hon. Jack Cullen (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): No, Mr. Speaker, other than what has been referred to dealing with the cancellation of English classes for immigrants, I have had no other communication to that effect.

Mr. Alexander: Mr. Speaker, in light of the gravity of this situation and of the fact that the minister intends to meet the provincial minister responsible for immigration, would he at the same time take it upon himself to meet the minister of manpower, if that is what he is called in the province of Quebec, in order to determine what that government's intentions are with respect to these federal-provincial agreements, and would he kindly report his findings to the House?

Mr. Cullen: We have in each province a manpower needs committee and the Quebec federal manpower committee is to meet within the next ten days. At that time our officials will be having discussions, and perhaps out of that will flow any suggestions that have to be made. I think Mr. Couture was talking at one instant about doubling the amount of money spent on training in French language for immigrants, but given the decline in immigration it does not seem to be warranted. But I think our federal-provincial manpower committee should look into all these areas and these items will be discussed probably before I meet with my opposite number in Quebec.