

Privilege

• (1500)

How can the minister of defence justify that an acknowledged racist trains Canadian soldiers on a voluntary basis, and does the minister endorse the comments made by Major Doug Martin, who does not see any problem since that individual is not paid for his work?

[English]

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this occurred in 1992 at CFB Chilliwack and involved the reserve forces.

A former British commando was brought in for instruction. He happened to bring someone else along. Neither was paid by the Department of National Defence and the kind of instruction that was given to those young men was not in conformity with the normal training of the armed forces.

I have asked our officials to look into why the commanding officer at the time did not report what was obviously some behaviour that was not ordered by the military and not paid for by the armed forces.

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PRESENCE IN THE GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of members the presence in the gallery of Mr. Chalermphol Sanitwongchai, First Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Kingdom of Thailand and three of his fellow parliamentarians.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

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PRIVILEGE**BUDGET SECRECY**

The Speaker: On Friday before we broke, the hon. member for Sherbrooke brought up a question of privilege.

At that time the Chair said we would wait to make a decision until we heard from the member who had allegedly made certain comments.

I have received notice in writing that the hon. member for Guelph—Wellington would like to speak to this question of privilege.

Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain (Guelph—Wellington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to respond to a question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Sherbrooke on March 3, 1995.

On March 2, I was contacted by the chief government whip. He informed me that a possible question of privilege could be

raised in the House. Following the conversation, I prepared a written statement for the chief government whip and for all members of the House of Commons.

This statement was put on the record by the government whip on March 3 and I thank him. The *Hill Times* column discussed at length by the hon. member for Sherbrooke on March 3, 1995 contains a quote by me regarding the budget.

In my comments to the *Hill Times* I was referring to the measures announced by the President of the Treasury Board on February 21, 1995. These measures were presented publicly prior to the budget and resulted from concerns as expressed by members of all parties, including the Liberal caucus, for the future downsizing of the public service.

The number of public servant reductions was not known until the budget, although measures such as the early retirement incentive and the early departure incentive were announced earlier.

While never informed of the details, we were told the budget would be tough but fair. I was not privy to any confidential information, nor am I aware of any other member's having knowledge of the contents of the budget before it was presented to all Canadians.

We know the importance of budget secrecy. It is a tradition, respected and practised by the Minister of Finance. I appreciate the opportunity to provide my response to the question of privilege raised the previous sitting day.

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it would be valuable for the entire House to have clarified in the question of privilege whether the article as reported in the *Hill Times* is inaccurate. The heading says: "Is there too much secrecy surrounding the budget?" The member did respond to that.

The quotation talks about major cuts to programs rather than a downsizing of the civil service which was announced prior to the budget in a general way.

There are some specifics quoted in this paper that were not responded to by the member. This House deserves a more clear response. Either this is wrong or else the member is not clear in her response.

• (1505)

The Speaker: I have had the opportunity to reread *Hansard* of Friday, March 3. I will be seeing the television recordings later this afternoon.

I will reserve my decision now that the hon. member for Guelph—Wellington has explained what she said. I will come back to the House with a decision at the earliest possible time if necessary.