

Civil Service Act

Mr. Graftey: Mr. Chairman, I will be the first to admit that a series of diversions have turned us away from the pith and substance of this debate. I can also assure hon. members opposite that over the last 10 minutes I have tried to terminate this speech on a matter of principle. That principle is simply this. This administration is going to restore this line of division, a line of division that was made not too clear by the past administration when legislators invaded the administrative wing of government and vice versa. We all know what is going on in the country today. These are principles that should be stated and restated.

An hon. Member: It is too late.

Mr. Graftey: I intend to state and restate them both inside and outside of this House of Commons.

Mr. Habel: Will the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Graftey: Yes.

Mr. Habel: Will the hon. member tell us whether it was not the Prime Minister who promised to do away with the rule of closure? Has he done so?

Mr. Graftey: As I understand the question, it was whether it was not the Prime Minister—

The Chairman: Order. I think I should not allow the hon. member to reply to a question which is really not relevant and which would take us far away from the bill. I do not think the question was relevant to the general theme the hon. member was trying to develop.

Mr. Habel: In fact, Mr. Chairman. I should say that the question was certainly relevant to the speech made by the hon. member for Brome-Missisquoi.

(Translation):

Mr. Martineau: Mr. Chairman, I rise merely to answer an attack which I would call underhanded launched by the hon. member for St. Jean-Iberville-Napierville (Mr. Dupuis) against the Secretary of State, who is not in the house at this time because of other duties.

Apparently, Mr. Chairman, the hon. member has never taken the trouble to study the background of the bill now before the committee. He has therefore failed to realize that it seeks to amend the Civil Service Act which was introduced in 1918 by the then acting minister of finance, Mr. A. K. MacLean, which indicates that the Civil Service Act is properly the responsibility of the Minister of Finance. As to the Secretary of State, he is

[Miss LaMarsh.]

only the spokesman for the civil service commission in this house.

It is therefore quite appropriate for the Minister of Finance or his representative, the parliamentary secretary, to pilot this measure through the house.

Mr. Dupuis: Mr. Chairman, I shall be brief. When the parliamentary secretary of the Prime Minister says my attack was underhanded, he is of course using an expression that was quite popular in Quebec in the days of the Union Nationale. I have never been underhanded.

I will say to my hon. friend, who looks upon himself as a fountain of knowledge, that I knew the civil service bill had been introduced in 1918.

However, my hon. friend apparently does not know that for several years secretaries of state have made it a point to be present in the house and to take part in discussions on the Civil Service Act.

I think my hon. friend should know that in 1918, the secretary of state department did not exist. Perhaps my hon. friend is not aware of it, but that responsibility was entrusted to the secretary of state around 1930. I think I am giving now a lesson to the parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister who does not seem to know what happened in the past. I think it was only in 1930 or thereabout, that the secretary of state began to look after the civil service commission. From that time on, the secretary of state has been responsible to the house for the civil service commission.

My hon. friend says that I was underhanded with regard to the Secretary of State. Not at all.

We have now been studying this bill for two days. The Secretary of State was present yesterday. He was in this house during the question period today. But the very minute the discussion of the civil service bill was announced, which should interest him first and foremost, he left the house.

Mr. Pigeon: That is dishonest.

Mr. Dupuis: I object to that and protest against such an attitude.

Mr. Martineau: Mr. Chairman, the hon. member does not seem to know that the Department of the Secretary of State is one of our oldest departments.

Mr. Dupuis: Mr. Chairman, on a question of privilege. The hon. member for Joliette-L'Assomption-Montcalm (Mr. Pigeon) just said I was dishonest. I am asking him to retract that epithet, which suits him better than me.