

Inquiries of the Ministry

then that the minister would be very happy to answer these questions today.

An hon. Member: Smile, Bud.

Mr. Stanfield: I should like to ask the President of the Treasury Board, who has asserted there was nothing secret about the program to hire Francophone university graduates, whether he has any explanation to give for the note on the memorandum of the Public Service Commission of Canada which states:

This information is confidential and no official announcement will be made.

If this matter was not secret would the minister also explain why there was no discussion with the Public Service Alliance on a matter of such basic importance to the alliance and the Public Service?

Hon. C. M. Drury (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I understand that this matter was discussed yesterday to some degree. This note reflects a misunderstanding as to what the memorandum represents. The first paragraph, if the hon. member will read it, makes it quite clear that this is conditional. It states:

The basis of the survey was a request as to how many additional Francophone graduates you could gainfully employ should the salary costs be covered from funds outside your budgeted programs.

This is in the nature of what I may describe generally as a feasibility study. In trying to determine what is feasible and what is not, I think this can be most usefully done in private by the officials rather than in a public way which would lead inevitably to expectations that might not in the event be justified. The confidentiality referred to here is in relation to this particular program under gestation, if indeed such a program eventually were approved by the government.

Mr. Diefenbaker: In frustration.

Mr. Drury: I might say that this memorandum outlining a procedure for increasing the proportion of Francophones in the Public Service is not an approved program. It will not be a program approved by the government until it has been submitted to the Treasury Board and approved—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I apologize for interrupting the minister, but I do not think he should make a statement at this time unless he wants to revert to motions. I appreciate that he is trying to reply to the question as completely as possible, and that is very much in order.

Some hon. Members: Revert to motions.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps at this point the Leader of the Opposition, if he has a supplementary question, might be allowed to ask it.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Revert to motions.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether the President of the Treasury Board wishes to revert to

[Mr. Stanfield.]

motions so he can make a full statement, but I assume he does not since the offer was made to him previously. I have a supplementary question. The memorandum definitely refers to aspects of "the program", which suggests that in fact there is a program. May I ask the President of the Treasury Board a question relating to his assertion that this program was simply a normal extension of the efforts of the government to increase the number of Francophones in the Public Service. Does the President of the Treasury Board know of any previous instances in which the Public Service Commission confined appointments to persons of a specified racial origin?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have some doubts about that question. The Leader of the Opposition is asking the minister whether he knows of previous instances in which this policy was followed. I am not prepared to recognize that the question is in order.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, the purpose of my question is to elucidate how this can be considered a normal extension of the government's policy. Can the President of the Treasury Board tell the House of previous instances in which such a policy has been applied?

Mr. Drury: Well, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the minister might try to reply in some way. I certainly do not wish to be obstructive on a matter which hon. members appear to consider very important, but when the Leader of the Opposition seeks information concerning whether a situation has applied in the past that is not a proper question for the question period. The Leader of the Opposition has perhaps qualified the question and in this sense the President of the Treasury Board may wish to reply.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I wish to co-operate with the Chair and I will put the question in a different way. I ask the President of the Treasury Board whether, in his opinion, it is consistent with the acts of this Parliament for the filling of positions to be confined to persons of a certain racial origin as distinguished from the question of language specifications? Is it the position of the government that specifying racial origin as a prerequisite for filling positions, as distinct from competence in language, is consistent with the legislation of this Parliament concerning the Public Service?

Mr. Drury: Mr. Speaker, I am afraid we are getting into semantic problems here because I am not sure that Francophone indicates or connotes a racial origin.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Drury: I would find it difficult, therefore, to indicate occasions on which the Public Service had simply sought out people of a particular racial origin in the past. They have not and, indeed, the law precludes this.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!